Instructions
FOR THE
WHOLE YEAR.

PART II.

TOME II.

FOR
Sundays.

BEING
Practical Thoughts on the EPISTLES and GOSPELS of all the SUNDAYS, and Movable FEASTS, from the *Octave* of *Easter*, to *Quinquagesima-Sunday*.

Printed in the Year 1698.

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1606/1657.

Instructions
FOR
Sundays.

Sixteenth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE,

Epheſ. C. 3. V. 13. to the end.

I *Bend my Knees to the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt,* —— *that according to the Riches of his Glory, he may grant you to be ſtrengthened by his Holy Spirit in the inward Man.* This was the great Charity of St.

Paul to his Flock, who being truly ſenſible of the many Difficulties and Dangers in a Chriſtian Life, and how large a Portion of Grace was abſolutely neceſſary for their Conduct and Security, therefore made it the Subject of his Prayers, that they might be ſtrengthen'd by God's Holy Spirit in the Inward Man. This is a ſufficient Motive to quicken a like Spirit of Charity in all Paſtors, in regard of the Flock committed to them; not to be indifferent and unconcern'd at the State of their Souls; but with a Fatherly Care to obſerve all their Spiritual Wants, with laborious Endeavours to ſeek to redreſs all their Evils, and with fervent and daily Prayers, to bend their Knees before the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that he would vouchſafe them his Divine Aſſiſtance, for their Protection againſt all Dangers, and bringing them to a happy End of this troubleſome Pilgrimage. A Paſtor, that thus knows how to be Sollicitous for his Flock, who has them in his Heart, who eſteems them, with St. *Paul*, his Joy and his Crown, certainly inherits the Spirit of this great Apoſtle; but to be cold and negligent in their Concerns, is the Spirit of a Hireling, of one that ſeems more Sollicitous how to live by them, than how to make them live. Perfect, O God, this Zeal of St. *Paul*

Paul in all that undertake his Charge, and make them truly ſenſible, that 'tis in their Hands, by their Watchings and Labours, to make their People the Subject of their Joy and Triumph, or by their Negligence, the Subject of their Deſpair and Damnation at the Laſt Day.

But this Prayer of the Apoſtle is not a Leſſon only to Paſtors, but alſo to the Flock, to excite in them a like Zeal and Diligence for their obtaining of God that Grace, whereby they may be daily ſtrengthen'd in the inward Man. For certainly, if they ſeriouſly conſider the almoſt infinite Difficulties and Dangers that are before them; and on the other ſide, how altogether unable they are of themſelves to overcome them, they will ſoon diſcover an abſolute neceſſity of joyning with their Paſtors, and making their conſtant Application to the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt for the obtaining his help, without which they muſt unavoidably fall a Prey to the Enemy of their Salvation, and be loſt for Ever.

Let but any one reflect on the Corruption of our Nature, and its ſtrong Inclinations to Evil; on the variety of Temptations, to which we are ever expos'd; that one no ſooner goes, but another comes; that while we avoid one

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Extreme, we generally run into the other how naturally we abuſe all the Bleſſings and Gifts of God: What Difficulties there are in conquering any ill Cuſtom, in mortifying our Paſſions, our proper Judgment, our Will, our Imagination, our Senſes; in preventing the Effects of Self-love, private Intereſt and Pride in the beſt of our Actions: What Difficulties there are in diſcharging the Obligations belonging to all States, not only of Paſtors and Magiſtrates, but of Parents, Maſters, Stewards, Truſtees, Lawyers, Traders, Children, Servants: What Difficulties in breaking thro' the Vices of the Mode, and the World, which have Practice, Authority, and Numbers to recommend them, and yet are ſuch, in many Particulars, as are at defiance with the whole Spirit of Chriſt and his Goſpel: What Difficulties in the true uſe of Plenty, Riches and Peace: What Difficulties in Sickneſs, Troubles, Poverty, in Darkneſs and Drineſs of Spirit: What Difficulties in the great diſproportion of our Reaſon with all the Myſteries of God; in governing our wild, roving and ſenſual Phancies; in all the Acts of true Repentance, Devotion and Virtue; in not being deceiv'd with the falſe Comforts of a Counterfeit Mercy, a Counterfeit Humility, a Counterfeit

terfeit Patience and Devotion, by their not being grounded aud rooted in Charity, which is the Life of all Virtue: What Difficulties, in fine, in dying happily, and being preſented before the Judgment Seat to render an Account of our Stewardſhip, and of all our idle Thoughts, Words and Actions. Theſe, and infinite others, are the Difficulties belonging to a Chriſtian State, ever accompanied with ſo many Dangers from the hidden Snares of our Spiritual Enemy, from the Indiſcretion, Provocation, Malice, and ill Example of Neighbours, from the Corruption of our Nature, and Inſincerity of our Hearts, that we may ſay truly, we are encompaſs'd with Evils on every ſide, and walk in the midſt of Enemies from the firſt glimpſe of Reaſon, till the laſt Moment, when Death ſhuts our Eyes. And then if we look into our ſelves, and ſee what grounds of Security from within our ſelves againſt all theſe Dangers, we can diſcover nothing, but what is ſufficient to terrifie, and even caſt us into Deſpair. We can ſee nothing but Miſery and Weakneſs, Poverty and Blindneſs; ſo far from being able to do any thing for our Security, that of our ſelves we are not able ſo much as to frame one good Thought.

And is not this Conſideration of our great danger on the one ſide, and our extreme Weakneſs on the other, a ſufficient Motive to make our moſt earneſt Addreſſes to Almighty God, that he would pleaſe to watch over us, to ſtrengthen us interiorly by his Holy Grace, and conduct us ſafe through all Difficulties and Dangers. We are nothing of our ſelves, and if he helps us not, we ſhall ever remain in our Weakneſs, and moſt certainly be overcome by our Enemies; and the Conſequence of this, is not only a Slavery to Sin here, but an Everlaſting Slavery hereafter, from whence there can be no Redemption. One would think, this abſolute dependance we have on God, would make us conſtant at our Prayers; and the hopes of ſecuring us againſt Eternal Evils, would oblige us to be attentive to them. But ſee here a demonſtration of our prodigious inſenſibility: 'Tis not all this is ſufficient to prevail on us in this Point; but as to the generality, I fear, of Chriſtians, I may ſay, their Devotions are perform'd with ſo great a Diſtraction and Coldneſs, that one would not imagine the ſubject of them to be a Concern of Eternity, or that the Succeſs of it had any dependance on God. 'Tis moſt prodigious, that having a Faith of Everlaſting

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ing Life, this ſhould make ſuch weak Impreſſions in us, as not only to let us be ſo heartily buſied with this World, but likewiſe be ſo unconcern'd at our very Prayers, as to permit every Trifle to take place of Eternity, and every impertinent Thought to turn God out of our Hearts. What can we ſay of this, but only admire this our Miſery, and truly humble our ſelves at the ſight of our Weakneſs; and uſe our beſt Endeavours, that, amongſt all our other Infirmities, this ſtrange Stupidity at our Devotions, ſhould make at preſent ſuch a lively impreſſion on us, as to become a Remedy of that Evil which we lament, and leave in us ſuch a laſting Senſe of our Miſery, as to put us, not only this Day, but our whole Lives, upon joining with the Apoſtle, in bending our Knees to the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that according to the Riches of his Glory, he may grant us to be ſtrengthen'd by his Holy Spirit in the inward Man? For 'tis thus only we can eſcape all the Dangers before us, and ſecure to us the poſſeſſion of Life Everlaſting.

Sixteenth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 14. V. 1. ends V. 11.

IT came to paſs, when Jeſus enter'd into the Houſe of a certain Chief of the Phariſees to eat Bread. We cannot do better on this Day, than enter with Jeſus into this Houſe, and ſee what we can learn from him.

The firſt Leſſon is to Paſtors, who being oblig'd to have ſome Commerce with the World, ought not to let this be, to amuſe themſelves, or paſs away their time, which they are at a loſs how to employ; for this they do not learn from Jeſus Chriſt; but for ſome Advantage of themſelves or others, as Chriſt here did, for healing the Sick Man, and inſtructing the Phariſees in the true Principles of Humility. Such Commerce is Authoriz'd by Chriſt, but not that, which is unprofitable, which cannot fail of giving Authority to whatever is done in their Preſence, and is a Reproach to their Character, in be-

betraying a want of worldly Amuſements to help away their Time, or to keep up their Spirits.

The Second is general to all Chriſtians, to put them in mind, that 'tis not only lawful to heal on the Sabbath, but that as Chriſt then reſtor'd Health to the Sick Man, that was before him, ſo they ought ever to look on it as a Day appointed by God, in Mercy to them, wherein they are commanded to conſider of all the Infirmities of their Souls, and have recourſe to ſuch Means, as he has ordain'd for their Cure. If he has forbid all Servile and Unneceſſary Labour, 'tis not becauſe this is in it ſelf unlawful, but that ſuch Labours may be no hindrance to better Duties: And hence it muſt be adviſable for all, to conſider the End of this Prohibition, and to cut off a great part of thoſe Labours, which Cuſtom, Gluttony, Vanity, Niceneſs or Vice ſeem to have made Neceſſary; that ſo Servants, who are under the diſſipation of continual Labour all the Week, may, on this Day, have leiſure to provide for Eternity, and not charge their neglect of Salvation on thoſe, who knowing not how to diſpence with Cuſtom, would not allow them time to think of it. And if they here obſerve the reaſon, why Labour is forbid, may not they

hence frame a true Judgment of all other Methods, that are a hindrance to the Duties of the Day, as in giving the greateſt part of it to Sleeping, Sloth, Converſation, Entertainments, Viſits, *&c.?* A Day thus ſpent is far from being kept Holy; and therefore not anſwering the Purpoſes of its Inſtitution, cannot be approv'd in thoſe, who are then call'd, both by Command and Example, to ſeek the health of their Souls, and make proviſion for Eternity.

The Third Leſſon is the Charitable Condeſcendence of Chriſt, who not letting the ill Diſpoſition of the Jews hinder him from healing the Sick Man on the Sabbath, yet, at the ſame time, was Sollicitous to remove the Scandal, this Cure had caus'd in them; and for this End, lays before them the moſt plauſible Reaſons, and ſuch as were moſt proportion'd to their miſtaken Judgments. From which Fact it may be obſerv'd, that how unjuſt ſoever the Scandal be, yet we ought always to remedy it, if we can. And ſuch Endeavours cannot fail either of the Effect deſir'd, or of diminiſhing ſomething at leaſt of the Averſion rais'd; ſince this being an Argument of regard being had to their Judgments, it muſt neceſſarily render them more favourable. The not va-

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luing unjuſt Scandals, is, on the contrary, often the Effect of a ſecret Contempt, or of want of Charity, or of Sloth at leaſt, which will not take pains to ſatisfie ſuch People, upon what Motives they have acted: Whilſt true Charity and Humility oblige us to more Condeſcendence; ſince the more People are unjuſt, the greater is their Indiſpoſition; and in proportion to their Diſtemper, ſo are they more worthy of Compaſſion.

A Fourth is to obſerve in the Phariſees, how much the Judgment is corrupted by Paſſion: We ſee in them, that ſometimes the Paſſions are favourable to Reaſon, and ſometimes ſtand againſt it; whence it happens, that the ſame Reaſon approving what is Conformable to its Principles, when the thing happens to be ſuitable to Paſſion too, is rejected as being of no force, when it is not at the ſame time favourable to Paſſion, and wants this Support, or is contrary to ſome other Paſſion, which is more violent. The Phariſees were very Covetous, and this Paſſion made them unwilling to loſe any thing belonging to them, as their Ox, or Aſs, or any thing elſe, tho' but inconſiderable: Hence their love of Intereſt influencing their Reaſon, made them judge aright, when this Matter was before them, and they were ready enough

in concluding, that it was no violation of the Sabbath, to take their Ox or Aſs out of a Ditch on that Day, and do what ſhould be neceſſary to preſerve them: But their love of their Neighbour being not very great, and their exceſſive Vanity, puſhing them on to render themſelves remarkable for their exact Obſervation of the Law, this Vanity made them conclude it a breach of the Sabbath, to Relieve and Cure a Sick Man on that Day. Their Intereſt was here greater than the Opinion they had of the Strictneſs of the Sabbath-Law; but the Love of their Neighbour, being leſs than the Deſire they had of ſignalizing themſelves, in the rigorous keeping of the Law; hence they judg'd it reaſonable to conſult the Safety of what was their own, but made it the Subject of the Memory, to paſs by their Neighbour in Miſery, and neglect his Intereſt, under the Pretext of Piety. So that they were unjuſt both in the one and the other, becauſe, even when they reaſon'd aright, it was not by the force of Reaſon, but only of their Paſſion, and the Love of their own Intereſt.

Whence we have two Inſtructions: One from the Argument taken up by Chriſt againſt the Phariſees; That for doing Good to others, it is Wiſdom to ſtudy

dy in them thoſe Particulars, where their Paſſions give them a taſte of Reaſon; ſo to make them ſenſible of their Injuſtice, or affected Miſtakes in other Points, where their Paſſions make them inſenſible of the Force it carries with it. The other from the Example of the Phariſees; to wit, That there is nothing, which Piety, overrul'd by Paſſion, is not capable of abuſing. This made them deſpiſe their Neighbour in his Affliction; perſwade their Followers to abandon their Parents in Diſtreſs, under the Pretext of honouring God with the Money, that ſhould have been their Relief, and to ſcruple at Trifles, whilſt they made bold with the Eſſential Precepts of the Law; as in putting Chriſt to Death by their falſe Accuſations, and making a Conſcience of laying the Silver, which *Judas* brought, in the Treaſury of the Temple. And if thus the Devil leaves in Men the Appearance of Conſcience and Piety, whilſt by evident Crimes he takes away the Subſtance, is there not Reaſon for all to be upon the watch, ſo to prevent their deceiving themſelves with the Shadow of Virtue, and being deceiv'd by the counterfeit Piety of others?

The laſt Leſſon is the Inſtruction given by Chriſt to the Phariſees, for avoiding Pride; where, by putting them in mind

of the Affront, to which a Perſon expoſes himſelf; who chuſing the firſt place, is in danger of being remov'd with Shame, and oblig'd to ſurrender it to others, he helps their Reaſon, even by Pride it ſelf, for the condemning of Pride. By this Hint here given us, we may learn to advance the Cauſe of Humility in many other Occaſions, by employing Pride againſt Pride. For ſince it is obvious, that whatever Perſons are obſerv'd to do, for diſtinguiſhing themſelves from others, is enough to make them ridiculous and odious, and moſt certainly renders them contemptible; and that there is a neceſſity of Counterfeiting Humility and Modeſty, for coming to the End of Vanity, which is gaining the Eſteem of Men; is not this Argument enough to convince all of the Deformity of Pride; ſince it is of that Nature, that even Men cannot bear it, if it be not diſguis'd? And what then muſt it be in regard of God, who being Juſtice and Truth it ſelf, ſees its whole deformity, and not only when 'tis barefaced, but even under its moſt ſubtle diſguiſes? And whilſt Reaſon thus help'd by Pride, is oblig'd to condemn it, ought it not to go on farther, and not only condemn it, as 'tis Ridiculous to Man, but under all its Covers, and in its whole Extent, becauſe

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of the Eſſential Injuſtice in it, which renders it deteſtable to God? Thus Chriſtians ought to do, and conſequently to own this Truth, That he, who exalts himſelf, ſhall be humbled; that is, be as nothing in the ſight of God. This, O Jeſus, we are bound to acknowledge, as likewiſe the Mercy of all other Truths, thou haſt here taught us; grant only, that we may daily improve from thy Inſtruction, and may not be carried away by the violence of our own Paſſions, or miſtaken Reaſon, while we have thy Truths to enlighten us, and make us watchful againſt all ſuch Deluſions.

Seventeenth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE,

Epheſ. C. 4. V. 1. ends V. 6.

I *Who am in Chains for our Lord, beſeech you to walk worthy of the Vocation, to which you are call'd.* This is the Requeſt of St. *Paul* in Priſon, and 'tis of ſo great an extent as to comprehend all Chriſtian Duties. For to deſire us to walk worthy

of our Vocation, is to desire Christians to walk in every respect as becomes Christians, and not to forget the Obligations of the State, to which they are call'd; just as if one should recommend to Persons of Honour, in all things to remember their Degree, and never do any thing, that should be unbecoming their Quality. This is an excellent general Rule for Christians ever to carry with them, whereby to measure all their proceedings, and direct them, what to follow, and what to avoid; and certainly, were it observ'd, tho' it might leave way for Indiscretions; yet it would cut off those numberless Sins, which ruin their Souls, and cast so great an Infamy on their Profession.

But the Apostle is not content with Generals; he descends to Particulars, and shews how a Christian ought to walk worthy of his Vocation, *viz. With all Humility and Meekness; with Patience; bearing with one another in Charity; being Sollicitous to preserve the Unity of Spirit in the Bond of Peace.* These are the Qualifications he sets down becoming the Christian State, in which none can dispence with themselves, and yet walk worthy of their Profession. For a Christian is one, that undertakes to be a Follower of Christ, and to live according the Spirit of the Gospel;

pel; now the Goſpel being the Rule, and Chriſt the Example of all Humility, and Meekneſs, of Patience, Charity and Peace; whoever Copies theſe not out in his Soul, and does not practice them in his Life, cannot poſſibly be reckon'd a Follower of Chriſt and his Goſpel: For if inſtead of Humility, he follows the Suggeſtions of Pride; if inſtead of Meekneſs, there be Harſhneſs and Obſtinacy; if inſtead of Patience, there be Paſſion and Repining; if inſtead of Bearing and Forgiving, there be Retaliating and Revenge; if inſtead of Peace, there be Diſſention and Quarrels; is it not plain, in all this there's a forſaking the Goſpel, and departing from Chriſt? Is it not walking in ways quite contrary to his, and practiſing what he condemns as unworthy of a Chriſtian? How then can ſuch an one ſit down at peace under a Chriſtian Name, while in his Life and Practice, he quite abandons, or rather makes War with him, whom he pretends to follow? For what has Pride, Obſtinacy, Paſſion, Revenge, and Uncharitable Contentions to do with Chriſt? Are not all theſe the effects of the *Old Man*, which he commands his Followers to put off? And what have his Diſciples to do with them, who are all commanded to be like their Maſter?

Maſter? And ſuch as are not, walk unworthy of their Vocation.

Theſe Virtues then here recommended by St. *Paul*, are the indiſpenſible Duties of every Chriſtian; but that of preſerving Peace and Unity, is what he moſt earneſtly preſſes, and with the ſtrongeſt Arguments, becauſe we are all but *One Body*; there is but *One Spirit*, and *One Hope* to which we are all call'd: There is but *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptiſm, One God, and Father of all, who is over all*, whoſe Providence extends to all, and who reſides in all. Are not here powerful Motives to preſerve a perpetual Peace and Union amongſt all that belong to Chriſt? 1. The Unity of his Myſtical Body, of which we are Members. 2. The Unity of the Holy Spirit, who cements all together in One Body. 3. The Unity of the Divine Being, in which we ought all to be conſummated for all Eternity. 4. The Unity of the Maſter and Head, to whom we all belong, and of the Sacrifice, by which he has Redeem'd us. 5. The Unity of Faith and Goſpel, which we profeſs. 6. The Unity of the Sacrament, by which we are all regenerate, and receive our Spiritual Being. 7. The Unity of our Creator, who has taken us out of the ſame nothing.

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8. The Unity of a Heavenly Father, who governs us by the ſame Authority, fills us with his Preſence, and unites us to him by his Love. Thus Almighty God having reduced all his Works to Unity, and above all, that principal one of his Church; whoever contributes to any Diviſion, directly oppoſes the Deſigns of God, and the Miſſion of Jeſus Chriſt. God will have peace amongſt us, therefore there can be no doing the Will of God, where there is not a preſerving of Peace. And tho' there may be ſometimes preſſing Motives ſuggeſted for the making Contentions reaſonable, yet inaſmuch as theſe can have no proportion to that *General Good* of *Unity*, all theſe betray an unreaſonableneſs in them, whilſt aiming at ſome Particular Good, they undermine the General; and therefore however clothed with the pretext of Charity and Juſtice, muſt be ever ſuſpected, if not condemn'd as the effect of Paſſion, Self-love, and Private intereſt: And are certainly of that dangerous and deceitful Nature, that even Learning, Sincerity, and ordinary Virtue, is not proof againſt them.

For once the Heart gives admittance to them, 'tis ſtrange what diſturbance they give to the Soul, by corrupting the Judgment, clouding the Reaſon, byaſſing the Affe-

Affections; ſo that a Perſon otherwiſe Virtuous, and moſt Impartial, when engag'd in any ſort of Contention, ought to ſuſpect all his own Deciſions; it being almoſt impoſſible for him in that diſorder, to carry his Thoughts even ſo as not to favour the part he eſpouſes, and repreſent the adverſe Cauſe with great Diſadvantages; ſo that we may almoſt generally conclude, that Injuſtice ever accompanies Contentions: And hence it is, that in all Differences, while each Party naturally takes upon them to be Judge in their own Cauſe, they proceed with ſo much ſeverity againſt each other, and paſs ſuch Cenſures, as raiſe wonder in indifferent Perſons, and Scandal too: Hence a little breach comes ſoon to be widen'd, and a ground is laid for great Animoſities and Averſions, which ſpreading amongſt the Favourers of each ſide, are ſcarce ever to be heal'd, but become irremediable Evils by being propagated to Generations. This Misfortune would not be ſo very conſiderable, were it confin'd to private Perſons, and Men of no Principles; but 'tis a Chriſtian's ſurprize to ſee it ſpread ſo much beyond theſe, that even profeſs'd Piety and Religion, is not exempt from it, not the Encloſure, not the Sanctuary nor the Altar: So that being of a Nature ſo pernicious

cious to Chriſtianity, that it ought not to be found, where this is profeſs'd, it is notwithſtanding this found every where; as if living in Contention were not injurious to a good Conſcience; and the breach of Peace were conſiſtent with true Piety: Thus truly one would gueſs by the great and almoſt general Differences kept up amongſt Chriſtians, who are but too eaſie, God knows, upon very inconſiderable grounds of Opinion and Intereſt, to tranſgreſs in this Fundamental Point, and let private Motives far out-weigh the publick, whereas it is their Duty to purchaſe Peace at any rate, and be willing to yield in many other Points, for the ſecurity of this. For *if any man ſeem to be contentious, we have no ſuch Cuſtom*, ſays St. *Paul*, *nor the Church of God.* And St. *Gregory* was ſo true a Diſciple of his, that he declares himſelf willing *rather to ſubſcribe to anothers Judgment contrary to his own, without prejudice to Faith, than be Contentious with him.* I wiſh St. *Paul* had more Diſciples of this mind, who would not only read his Epiſtles, but be careful to obſerve them, and particularly in being Sollicitous to preſerve *Unity*, and have a due regard to *Peace*, as a Fruit of the Spirit. 'Tis this ought to diſtinguiſh Chriſtians from all others, and this Charge they have from Chriſt

Christ himself; and without this, there's none can walk worthy of the Vocation to which they are call'd.

Seventeenth Sunday *after* Pentecost.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 22. V. 35. to the end.

WHat is *the Great Commandment in the Law?* This Question is put to Christ by a Doctor of the Law; and the Gospel observes his Design in proposing it, was *Tentans eum*, to Tempt or lay a Snare before him. There are Three Sorts of Enemies of Christ mention'd in this Chapter, and Three Sorts of Temptations or Snares prepar'd against him. The First, is of the Herodians or Politicians, and Persons of the Court, concerning the Rights of the Prince, and Matters of State, *ver.* 16. The Second of the Sadduces, or Hereticks and Libertines, about the Principles of Religion and Faith, *ver.* 23. The Third, of the Pharisees, or loose Casuists, and False Devotists, about Morality, and here in particular about the Love of God. From all

all theſe Chriſt wonderfully diſengag'd himſelf, according to the Dictates of his Infinite Wiſdom, ſo as to ſilence his Enemies, and let them make no Advantage of their Malicious Deſigns. From his Example, the Followers of Chriſt cannot be ſurpriz'd, if, like their Maſter, they cannot live in this World, without having Spies upon them, and ſuch, whoſe ſecret Malice puſhes them on, either to leſſen their Reputation, or ſeek their Ruin. They have only ſo much more reaſon to be Cautious in their Actions and Anſwers, inaſmuch as the moſt hidden Deſigns being manifeſt to Chriſt, they are too often conceal'd from them, under the Cover of a ſeeming Civility, and pretended Eſteem; and therefore obliges them, not only to a Prudent Reſervedneſs, but, moſt of all, to ſollicite Heaven daily; that by a Supernatural Wiſdom they may be arm'd againſt all Snares, and ſecur'd againſt the Dangers of their own Indiſcreet Candour, groundleſs Confidence in others, or immoderate Poſitiveneſs in their own Thoughts.

And this is not only to be in regard of Enemies, but of Friends too; the Goodneſs and Credulous Temper of thoſe, with whom we Converſe, being often a Snare to us. The more Confidence Perſons have in

in us, the more are we oblig'd to be on our guard, that we may not hurt them by what we ſay, who are ready to take all for a Rule. However therefore there be danger in converſing with ſuch as are averſe to us; yet I think, there are no Perſons, with whom we are bound to be more Circumſpect, and obſerve ſtricter Meaſures, than thoſe, who are prepar'd to take after our Example, ſince whatever we expoſe to their Eyes, is ſubject to be Copied; and, if it will not bear it, who muſt anſwer for the Conſequences of ſuch Indiſcretion? Thus then we may truly ſay, we live in the midſt of Snares, and are ever in danger of being ſurpriz'd in them, if the Communication of Chriſt's Heavenly Wiſdom be not our Light to diſcern them, and our Strength to avoid them.

The Demand being made to Chriſt, as above, he thus anſwers the Queſtion: *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind: This*, ſays he, *is the Firſt and Greateſt Commandment:* 'Tis the Greateſt in *Dignity*, becauſe it immediately regards God himſelf: In *Juſtice*, becauſe it alone renders to God what belongs to God, giving him the Preference to all things: In *Power*, becauſe it makes God alone Reign

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in our Hearts, and unites Man to God: In *Extent*, becauſe it leaves nothing to the Creature, which it does not refer to God: In *Neceſſity*, becauſe 'tis Indiſpenſible: In *Durance*, becauſe, being not to be interrupted on Earth, it is to laſt for all Eternity in Heaven.

The Love of God being thus the greateſt of all the Commandments, it muſt be the Chriſtian's greateſt Intereſt to ſatisfie it; and his Care in complying with it, ought to be anſwerable to the Greatneſs of the Command, and to the Intereſt he has in it; that is, it ought to exceed all other Cares and Concerns, whether for Health, Liberty, Life, or any other Convenience or Advantage of this World. O God! How Miſerable then am I, who daily feel the weight of ſo many other things preſſing upon my Spirits, above the Concern of Loving Thee!

It were to be wiſh'd, Chriſtians could come ſo far in this Point, as to find the Love of God bearing upon their Hearts with ſuch a weight, as to make them as earneſt in doing the Will of God, as eager in pleaſing him, as deſirous of enjoying him, as Parents are in regard of their Children, whom they love, and Friends of their Friends, whom they admire, and are Sollicitous more ſtrictly to engage

engage in them. Such an Inclination or Bent of the Heart, carrying it along with a ſweet Violence thro' all Duties and Difficulties of Life, is the moſt deſirable Comfort a Chriſtian can hope for in this Life, and that, which will give him the ſtrongeſt Aſſurance of being prepar'd for a better.

But it being a Priviledge granted to few, to have the Love of God thus ſenſibly to work upon the Affections, it ought not to be a Subject of Grief to Chriſtians, if they thus find it not; they are to be contented with whatever Diſpenſations of Grace and Love God ſhall grant them, and in the manner he ſhall pleaſe: Their greater Concern ought to be, rather to find the Effects, than the Feeling or Senſe of it; and therefore, if, upon Obſervation, they can diſcover, that they bring forth its Fruit, in avoiding Sin, and whatever God forbids, and in a zealous compliance with what they know to be his Will, ſo as not to permit either the Natural Affection to Creatures, or the love of Convenience, Intereſt, Pleaſure, or any earthly Satisfactions, to take place of Duty, but are ever ready to quit whatever is not conſiſtent with it, or puts it in hazard; this ought to give reſt to their Souls, and be ſufficient Argument to hope, that the King-

Kingdom of God is in them; that is, that God rules in them; and that his Love is Maſter of their Hearts; and where this Fruit is not found, there is nothing elſe can give a grounded Satisfaction; but ſuch Chriſtians are to ſuſpect themſelves of being Hypocrites or Counterfeits; whatever their Habit, Profeſſion, or remarkable Zeal otherwiſe be, tho' ſufficient to gain the Reputation of being Saints in the eſteem of Men.

But this Life being not a ſtate of Perfection, it is ſcarce to be expected, that the Love of God ſhould ſo entirely poſſeſs the Heart, as to exclude the love of all other things. If the Love of God has the firſt place in our Heart, ſo that we give God the preference to all things, and let nothing have the preference to him, we in this ſatisfie the ſubſtance of this Precept. But however there may be ſtill many Imperfections, as in the Deſire and Love of Creatures; not ſo as to make them our laſt end, for this would be Criminal, but only in ſuch a moderate way, as rather to be ſome Hindrance, than interrupt our Courſe towards God: In this degree, it cannot be denied, but ſuch voluntary Affections are in themſelves evil; and yet it cannot be thought, that God will impute them to us, as Crimes which deprive us

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of his Grace, and baniſh us his Preſence; ſince tho' they are the occaſion of our taking ſome falſe ſteps, in ſome voluntary Conſent to the love of Creatures, yet 'tis not in ſuch Capital Points, to which he has declar'd his abhorrence, with the Puniſhment annex'd of a perpetual excluſion from him.

All love of Creatures therefore is not Mortal, becauſe it has not always the command of our Hearts, ſo as to render us Slaves to it: But however, it fails not to be always dangerous, and is the beginning of Servitude, in moving the Heart by Fear, by Hope, by Deſires, and by continual Endeavours of bringing it into a total ſubjection; and ſince by this way it is in danger of loſing ground, by inſenſibly yielding to ſuch Attempts; hence are all oblig'd to look upon ſuch Affections as their Unhappineſs, and make it the Subject of their daily Prayers and Labours, to weaken and overcome them.

When they are Involuntary, and the Effect of Temper, they are a perplexing Exerciſe, ſuch as are very tireſome to Good Souls; but whatever their Violence and Continuance be, the Guilt cannot be charg'd upon them, more than of other Corrupt Inclinations, which they never feel, but with diſlike; in this Caſe Patience

ence and Humility is to be their help, rather than Penance; and Anxiouſly to diſquiet themſelves muſt be judg'd Indiſcretion. But the Caſe is otherwiſe, when dangerous Affections are voluntary; for in theſe, Man being ſubject to great Partiality and Blindneſs, a Neglect of them may be eaſily follow'd with very Criminal Exceſſes. Thus ſtands our Caſe, O God, that while we are commanded to love thee with all our Hearts, we are ever in danger of being unhappily drawn from thee by thy Creatures; which when we ſeriouſly conſider, and put them in the ballance againſt Thee, we can only Admire, and be Confounded at our Folly, in being thus diverted, by the Satisfaction of Momentary Trifles, from ſeeking the Poſſeſſion of thee our Infinite and Everlaſting Good. Help us, O God, in this our Miſery, ſtrengthen our Reaſon and Faith againſt ſuch Madneſs; permit us no more to let the love of Creatures take thy place in our Hearts; but as we deſire the Eternal Enjoyment of Thee, ſo give us Grace to ſeek it, by loving thee, as thou commandeſt, with all our Hearts, and with all our Souls.

Eighteenth

Eighteenth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE,

1 *Cor.* C. 1. V. 4. ends V. 8.

I *Always give thanks to God for you, for the Grace of God, which has been given you in Chriſt Jeſus.* The Bleſſings of God had made ſuch a deep impreſſion in the Heart of St. *Paul*, that he was not content with a paſſing and ſuperficial Thankſgiving; but he gave thanks always; not permitting preſent Employments to blot out the Memory of paſt Mercies, not even thoſe, which God had beſtow'd upon others. This was a Holy Diſpoſition in St. *Paul*; a fruit of his perfect Charity, of his Zeal for their good, and of the great Idea he had of God's Graces; and may be eaſily comprehended, if we compare our ſelves to this Great Apoſtle, by conſidering how little we are touch'd with the Bleſſings of Heaven, eſpecially thoſe, which others receive. We for our parts, hear a thouſand inſtances of theſe, and as ſoon forget them; we have but a very imperfect Senſe of them,

them, even whſle they are reported: And few are Sollicitous beyond the formality of a Phraſe, to render thanks for them: And if hapning to be our nearer Concern, they draw from us a more hearty Thankſgiving upon the ſpot: Yet new Affairs ſucceeding, ſoon ſtifle all theſe Motions of gratitude, the Heart is taken up with other Concerns; preſent Objects remove the paſt out of ſight; and we cannot with truth ſay with St. *Paul*, that we give God thanks always for his paſt Bleſſings, becauſe we don't ſo much as think of them. In this is our great Misfortune, we know only then to value God's Bleſſings, when we want them: And we are no ſooner in Poſſeſſion of them, but their Price preſently falls, and generally is quite forgot. How valuable is Eaſe to us in time of Pain; Health in time of Sickneſs; Quiet in time of Trouble; Peace in time of Perſecution; Security in time of Danger? And how much do we in theſe Circumſtances, offer for the Purchaſe of what we deſire? When God's Mercy favouring our Wiſhes, a ſhort Enjoyment preſently takes off from their Value, we grow cold and inſenſible; and a long poſſeſſion, which ſhould, in Juſtice, encreaſe our Gratitude, only ſerves us as a Motive to abuſe them againſt the Giver:

And by this our ungrateful Stupidity, I don't queſtion, we often oblige the Divine Goodneſs to interrupt our peaceable Enjoyments, by taking his Mercies from us, and viſiting us with Scourges, that by theſe he may awaken us, and make us ſenſible of his Favours, and force us to a more Chriſtian uſe of them. So that inſtead of being like St. *Paul*, in giving continual Thanks for ſuch Bleſſings, which others receive, we ſcarce give ſhort Thanks for our own; and therefore are more juſtly reſembled by the *Ten Lepers* heal'd in the Goſpel, of which number there was only one found, that return'd with Gratitude to acknowledge the Mercy of his Cure: For truly, I wiſh this be not the proportion of grateful Chriſtians; for who can tell me there's more than one in Ten, that gives thanks as they ought?

This we have but too much reaſon to apprehend, if we conſider the general abuſe of God's Bleſſings amongſt Chriſtians; and that thoſe, who enjoy the largeſt ſhare of them, inſtead of being grateful, are the Perſons who abuſe them moſt. Thus we ſee, there are none more bold Offenders, than thoſe of the ſtrongeſt Conſtitution, who ſeem ſecure of Health. Thoſe, who have the Advantage of Beauty or exact Proportion, have gene-

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rally ſo many degrees of Vanity and Pride: Thoſe, whoſe natural Eloquence makes them admir'd, but too commonly ſhew their Art in hurtful Flatteries, ſinful Perſuaſions, in Raileries, and Ridiculing of their Neighbours: And thoſe, who are bleſſed with Plenty, are not they the Perſons, above all others, who keep up the Credit, and give Authority to Vice; who waſte their Eſtates in Idleneſs, Luxury, and all manner of Exceſſes? This is the common Method even of the Chriſtian World; ſo that inſtead of making proportion'd Returns to Heaven of what they receive, all is preverted, and made the unhappy Inſtruments of Sin. Good Example and Piety is not now the Conſequence of Greater Bleſſings; but where theſe moſt abound, there is Iniquity in its greateſt State. And I wiſh this were the Character of thoſe only, who, by their Vicious Lives, ſeem to have renounc'd all Right to Heaven: For there's but too great reaſon to fear, that infinite others, who ſeem to keep within ſome bounds, ſhare in this ungrateful Guilt, tho' in a leſs offenſive way. For where are the Perſons, who being any ways bleſſed above others, do not turn theſe very Bleſſings, to the encreaſe of Self-love, and the Love of the World; ſo that whilſt by the parti-

cular Benefits of Heaven, they are in Juſtice bound to approach nearer God, by proportion'd ſteps of Love, they are too often found to depart ſtill farther from him? 'Tis thus the moderate Chriſtian, tho' free from Vice, yet ſtill, according to his Stock, makes his advance in the Vanity both of Cloaths and Table; and thoſe Self-denials, which under a ſtrait Fortune, he us'd to practice, now, upon favourable Additions, he quite lays by; he toils no more, and under this Mechanick Notion, withdraws himſelf from all Employment; he ſtudies now his Eaſe, ſeeks better Company, and by degrees, expenſive Diverſions become his Buſineſs; and thus employ'd, goes on unthinking, till his laſt Sickneſs ending all his Sport, puts him upon being ſerious, to make an untoward Preparation for that, which ought to have been the great Concern of his Health and Life. 'Tis thus the addition of Mercies, Mercies I ſay, abus'd, makes an Induſtrious, Careful and Pious Man, become a Man of Idleneſs and Eaſe, a Man of Inclination and Appetite, a Man of Senſe, and of this World; the more he receives from God, is only to pleaſe himſelf the more, and not the Giver; 'tis to make him love the Creatures more, and his Creator leſs.

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And where is now the Gratitude in this? Where is the Spirit of St. *Paul*, which ſhould be ever giving Thanks, and making of every Bleſſing a new ſtep to Heaven? 'Tis thus it ought to be in Chriſtians. For is not every Good receiv'd a Gift of the Divine Bounty? Is it not as ſo much Seed, from which moſt juſtly God expects the Fruit? And where is this Fruit, if all be abus'd and turn'd to Idleneſs or Sin? 'Tis plain then, all we receive from God, ought in ſome manner be return'd to him: *Redeant flumina unde manarunt.* All ought to appear in the Harveſt, not only of grateful Words, but of a more Chriſtian Life. Thus whatever the Bleſſings be, whether of Plenty, Peace, Good Name, Children, or any Succeſs, theſe ought to be ever follow'd with the Effects of a true Grateful Heart, in ſo many degrees of Piety, and Approaches made to God, in loving and ſerving him more faithfully, and a Sollicitude of applying his Gifts to the End for which he gave them; to his Honour, and their own, not ſo much Worldly, as Eternal Good. This is St. *Paul*'s Inſtruction; a Life of Chriſtian Piety being the only perpetual Thanks. And certainly moſt unhappy are they, who do not this: For ſince, the Account we are to give, ſtill

daily encreaſes in proportion to the Bleſſings we receive, muſt not the Day of Accounts be diſmal to them, who upon looking back on their whole Life, find, that inſtead of making Returns to God for all his Mercies, in the Gratitude of a Holy Life, they have perverted them to the love of themſelves and this World, and thus abus'd them all, in making them the unhappy Occaſions of offending him more? Deliver us, O God, from this Ingratitude; and as thou poureſt forth thy Bleſſings on us, ſo let this one Bleſſing more of thy Grace ever attend them, which may effectually teach us how to uſe them; that we may never more pervert thy Bleſſings into Curſes, but grow daily in Virtue, as they encreaſe upon us; and thus in the ſweet ſavour of Holy Life, offer thee a perpetual Thankſgiving.

Eighteenth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 9. V. 1. ends V. 8.

THey laid before him one ſick of the Palſie, lying on a Bed. This is the Perſon

ſon mention'd by St. *Luke*, *C.* 5. who being brought by his Friends to Chriſt, and finding no poſſibility of coming up to him, becauſe of the Croud, open'd the Roof of the Houſe, and with Cords let him down on his Bed before him. This their induſtrious Charity was ſoon approv'd by Chriſt; who, as the Goſpel ſays, *Videns fidem illorum*, *Seeing their Faith*, preſently turn'd to the Sick Man, and comforted him with the Hopes of his Immediate Cure. This Effect their Charity had upon Chriſt, in moving him to a preſent Compaſſion, ought to be an Encouragement to all others, to ſeek his Help, by the ſame Method. The Infinite Miſeries, to which we are ſubject in this Life, both as to Soul and Body, are Proof enough of the continual Want we have of his Aſſiſtance; and many of theſe are ſo preſſing, that they often put us upon conſidering, what may be the moſt Effectual Means for obliging him to come in to our Relief. This Point is here fully anſwer'd, that I think none, who deſire his Help, can be in doubt of the way they are to take for prevailing on his Goodneſs. And ſince the Method is ſuch, that there no Circumſtances, wherein Chriſtians have not the Opportunity of practiſing it, there can be none but thoſe,

who inſenſible of their own Miſeries, deſire no Help, that do not undertake it.

The Practice here directly encourag'd, is that of giving Aſſiſtance to the Sick; and in this Point the Charity of many Perſons and Families is very remarkable, who have not only their Doors always open to the Poor, and Medicines provided for their Infirmities, but are likewiſe ready to give them Attendance, and leave all other Buſineſs for their Comfort and Relief. How much better is Money and Time employ'd in making Proviſion for ſuch Charities, than in preparing Curioſities, which are never call'd for by Neceſſity, but only to anſwer the Endleſs, but Superfluous Demands of an Indulg'd Appetite! Whilſt the greater number therefore of Chriſtians are thus laying out their Money, in ways that will never be taken in Accounts, I encourage theſe better Stewards to go on in their Charitable Method of helping the Poor; and I dare be their Security, ſince I have Chriſt's Word to be mine, that God will be their Faithful Rewarder, in making all that their own Intereſt, which has been employ'd for the Relief of their Neighbours Diſtreſs. I only wonder, that amongſt ſuch numbers, who are every way capable

ble of doing Good to themſelves, by being Phyſicians and Comforters of the Poor, there are ſo few, who ſeek to make an Intereſt with Heaven this way, but chuſe rather to pleaſe themſelves in Idleneſs, than thus honourably to work for Heaven.

Beſides this, there are many other ways, even as many as our Neighbour is in want of our Aſſiſtance, and we are capable of giving it, by which we may render Heaven propitious to us. And this may be extended ſo far, as poſitively to pronounce, that there is not any Service ſo Mean and Inconſiderable, but 'tis in our Power, by putting our Hand to it, as Occaſion may ſeem to call us, to make it an Act of Charity, much more ſerviceable to our ſelves, than to thoſe we ſeem to help. Whence they have Reaſon to bleſs God for their happy Diſpoſition, who make no Exceptions againſt any thing they can do, but free from all niceneſs in this Affair, are ever ready and chearful, in lending a Hand, where-ever there appears Occaſion, that demands their Help; for theſe live in the continual Practice of Charity, and there is nothing wanting for making it their Eternal Advantage, but raiſing it above Natural Inclination, and offering it a Sacrifice to

God, in compliance with his Will, who has declar'd his Acceptance of it. And as for thoſe, who will go no further, than ſtrict Obligation ſeems to be a Force upon them, but are ever diſputing upon Terms, Bounds and Priviledges, and will not take one ſtep beyond the Evidence of theſe, without grumbling, I think they have reaſon to reſent their own ill Temper, and take pains, in overcoming it; for that the principal Ingredients of it are nothing better than Pride and Lazineſs; and as theſe muſt render them ridiculous to Men, ſo they muſt certainly bring them into the Diſpleaſure of God; ſince they muſt neceſſarily fall into many ſinful Omiſſions, who are with this niceneſs ſo often ſtanding upon Terms.

Beſides theſe Temporal Charities, there are many Spiritual; one Principal of theſe and obvious to all, thro' their Iniquity or Raſhneſs, with whom we converſe or live, is that of putting our Neighbour in mind of his Faults, in ſuch a manner, as may encourage him to be more careful and reform. This I here mention, becauſe St. *Auguſtine* judges the Omiſſion of it a great failing in the Good, to be ſenſible of the great Provocation the common Sins of Men give to God, and with what Rigorous Puniſhment he threatens them,

them, and yet to paſs them by without Cenſure or Reproof, as if there was nothing ſinful in them. This he preſſes ſo far in his *City of God*, as to think this Omiſſion to have been the principal Occaſion of that ſevere Judgment, in his days, upon *Rome* and *Italy*, when the *Goths* coming in like a Torrent, laid all waſte with a common Deſtruction. And he charges the Guilt of this Omiſſion in particular upon the Good; for that, tho' it was commendable in them, to diſtinguiſh themſelves from the Wicked, by not concurring in their Crimes; yet their Silence in reproving was culpable, ſince there was nothing could ſuſpend this Charity, but only Sloth, Vicious Baſhfulneſs, or the Fear of diſpleaſing, in the Attempt of doing them Good. 'Tis true, there is great Prudence neceſſary in performing this Charity; but however it may very often be ſafely practic'd; and, I fear, the great Reaſon of Silence, is rather the Weakneſſes cenſur'd by St. *Auguſtine*, than the Judgment of Diſcretion.

But however, it was not only the Charity of thoſe, that brought the Sick Man, but his own interior Diſpoſition, that prevail'd on Chriſt for his ſo ſpeedy Cure: For ſince we hear Chriſt thus ſpeaking to him; *Son, have Confidence, thy Sins are forgiven*

given thee, it cannot be doubted, but he had greater Senſe of the Diſtemper of his Soul, than of his Body; that while his Charitable Friends expected the Cure of his Palſie, he himſelf deſir'd more earneſtly the Pardon of his Sins; and that it was to anſwer his Deſire, Jeſus Chriſt ſaid to him; *Have Confidence, thy Sins are forgiven thee*: Since the Pardon of Sins is granted to none, but thoſe who ſincerely deſire it. And whilſt we ſee the Sick Man thus Cur'd of his Infirmity; and that the ſame Words, which declar'd the Health of his Soul, gave him Health of Body, have not we in this a plain Inſtruction, that Sickneſs is to be look'd upon, as the Puniſhment of Sin; and therefore, that under all Diſtempers, 'tis moſt adviſeable to look into the firſt Cauſe, and, like this Paralytic, to be more earneſt for obtaining Pardon of Sin, than the Cure of the Diſtemper, or, at leaſt, to ſeek Health by the Recovery of Grace. This muſt be a good Practice under all Misfortunes; for, tho' the Motives of Providence, in appointing or permitting them, may be many; yet one general Cauſe being in Puniſhment of Sin, a Chriſtian may ſafely look on them, as the ſigns of God's Diſpleaſure, and the Effects of Sin, and therefore, at their firſt Approach, cannot

do

do better, than to make his Peace with God, and in the Spirit of true Penance, labour to turn away his Anger from him; in which he cannot fail of a good Effect, either in removing his Affliction, or in obtaining ſuch Succours from God, by which he may be enabled to ſuffer with Patience, and make an Advantage of his Trial.

This is much more to the purpoſe, than to complain of his Burthen, and anxiouſly to diſquiet himſelf, in conſidering what may be the Occaſion of the Scourge, or to ſit down dejected upon the Suppoſition of God being angry; for this is yielding to the Deſigns of the Enemy, who thus contrives to oppreſs his Soul with Darkneſs, and by interior Confuſion, to prevent all the Fruit of his Sufferings: Whilſt a Sincere Repentance, joyn'd with an Humble Submiſſion to the Orders of Providence, will either remove the Evils, or make them Means of Salvation. Wherefore, O God, I here make it my Humble Petition to thee, that, at whatever time thou ſhalt viſit me with Affliction or Sickneſs, I may not then forget the Method of improving under it, by letting Impatience or Dejection oppreſs my Soul; but looking on it as a Summons to Repentance, I may be Solli-

citous

citous to make my Peace with thee, and then peaceable wait the Iſſue thy Goodneſs has appointed. In the mean time, let me be Induſtrious, in Contributing all ways I am able, to the help of my Neighbour, that ſo I may hope to find the Effects of thy Power and Mercy, when the Hour of Diſtreſs ſhall come upon me.

Nineteenth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE,

Epheſ. C. 4. V. 23. ends V. 28.

PUT *on the New Man, which is created according to God, in Juſtice and Sanctity of Truth.* One would think in the Search and Profeſſion of Virtue, there were no Danger of Miſcarriage, becauſe Virtue it ſelf ſeems a Security againſt all Snares; and ſo certainly it is, when 'tis according to God in Juſtice and Sanctity of Truth. But here's a great part of our Misfortune, that when by a laborious Diligence, we have diſengag'd our ſelves from all vicious Habits, and now ſeem fitted to become true Followers of Chriſt, we even find a way,

way, by more ſubtle Artifices, to adulterate the very Virtues themſelves, and to live at as great diſtance from God in the Profeſſion of reputed Virtues, as when engag'd in the open Practice of Vice; and this is a State ſo much more dangerous than the former, as the Evils of it are more undiſcernable. I ſay not this to terrifie ſincere Souls, but to give a Caution to as many as pretend to Virtue, to be ſincere in what they do, and while they renounce the Carnal Enemy, to be careful not to reſt contented under the Conduct of the Spiritual one; but that in putting on the New Man, they would be ever Sollicitous, it be that New Man mention'd by the Apoſtle, which is created according to God, in Juſtice and Truth.

For as there is Humility, Mercy, Piety, Patience, *&c.* of the New Man created according to God; ſo there is a falſe Humility, falſe Mercy, falſe Piety and Patience, which are of the Old Man, not created according to God, but the evident Effects of our Corruption. For whenever theſe proceed from no other root, but of Self-love, Convenience, Intereſt, or other Worldly and Humane Reſpects, what better Character do they deſerve? And is it not thus, Chriſtians are too often miſerably deluded, when be-

being very Edifying and Exemplar in all thoſe Practices, which are the Accompliſhment of their Profeſſion, and make them honour'd by as many as are Witneſſes of their Actions, they have no other Motives, after all, of what they do, but ſome Worldly Conſiderations, which oblige them to this more than ordinary Regularity? One, for Example, is liberal to the Poor, and in this ſeeks to be eſteem'd Charitable: Another, with a wonderful Humility, ſtoops cheerfully to mean Employments, and 'tis only to gain the Opinion of ſome, that by their Intereſt he may be preferr'd. A third bears Reproachful and Injurious Language, with admirable Patience, becauſe he dreads the Uneaſineſs of Contention. A fourth, with great Reſolution, ſtands againſt all Sollicitation to Evil, becauſe by yielding, is apprehended the loſs of Honour, and of Friends. A fifth cenſures and avoids all the expenſive Extravagancy of the Age, as to Dreſſes, Gaming and Entertainments, becauſe he adores his Money, and cannot be Modiſh *gratis*. A ſixth is ready to undertake any Charitable Office for a Friend, but is ever careful to ſow on rich Ground, which he knows is likely to make a good return. A ſeventh avoids being Criminal, apprehending the Difficulty

culty and Shame of afterwards confeſſing the Guilt. An eighth preſerves Innocence, becauſe Sin diſturbs his Eaſe. A ninth is frequent in the moſt Sacred Duties, but 'tis becauſe others are ſo; becauſe 'tis expected, or out of Cuſtom, or to eſcape reproof. A tenth is laborious and edifying in a Religious way, but 'tis ever in publick, where there's a Proſpect of Credit or Preferment. Thus 'tis but too often, in the practice of a Chriſtian Life, Pride, Self-love and Intereſt, are the only ſupport of all its reputed Sanctity. And how far is this from the New Man here recommended by the Apoſtle, being wholly void of Juſtice and Truth? There may be enough indeed to gain ſome Reputation with Men, who regarding only the outſide of Actions, cannot judge of the Interior; but this cannot deceive him, who is the Searcher of Hearts, who will ſeparate the Gold from the Droſs, and lay open all theſe Counterfeits of Piety; *Juſtitias judicabit.* For however Angelical the looks may be, he will ſtill diſcover the Cloven Foot, of Self-love and Intereſt, that lye conceal'd, and ſhew the Virtues of theſe Men to have had no better ſupport.

And what other Reward can then be expected from his Juſt Hand, but the Puniſhment

niſhment of Vice, and ſuch Vice which has proſtituted the moſt Sacred Actions to their own baſe Ends, made Heaven ſerve Earth, and abus'd Religion, to advance and ſanctifie their own Corruption? Such Vice, by which they rob the Almighty of what belongs to him, only to ſeek and ſet up themſelves? For certainly God being Eſſentially *Alpha* and *Omega*, the *Beginning* and *End* of all; he ought to be ſo to us in all we do. Our Humility, our Charity, our Patience, and whatever is good, ought ever to be begun in Him, becauſe he requires theſe to be the practices of a Chriſtian Life, and demands them from us. They are all again to end in him, by being offer'd to the Honour of his Name, and as the Accompliſhment of his Holy Will in us. This is the *Truth* and *Juſtice* which ought to be in all our Sanctity; and without this, whatever Sanctity we profeſs, 'tis being unjuſt to God, 'tis lying to the World, and nothing better than deceiving our own Souls.

How careful then is the good Chriſtian to be, not to ſeek Temporals by Eternals; but to put on that New Man, which is Created according to God, in Juſtice and Sanctity of Truth, and ſincerely endeavour to give to God, what in Juſtice

and

and Truth belongs to him? And tho', having done his beſt, he'll ſcarce ever ſo wholly gain this Point, as to hinder Pride, Vanity and Self-love, from creeping in even to his moſt Religious Duties; yet ſo far may be obtain'd, as ever to act upon better Motives of an Eternal Weight; and if theſe buſie Evils, will be importunely hovering, and putting in for a ſhare in all that's done, like the Birds about *Abraham*'s Sacrifice; upon reflection they may be renounc'd, and with the Patriarch's watchful Staff, be chaſed away. They are truly pernicious to all that's good, according to the Place they have: For if they go before us, and we are mov'd to undertake and act with them in view; our Actions cannot then be Chriſtian, which follow ſuch corrupt Guides: If they join in, as it were by accident, and go on accompanying us in what we do, they greatly leſſen the Value of all that's Virtuouſly begun: But if they only follow after, then their Malice is much leſs, and if renounc'd, can do no Prejudice by ſuch Attempts. A watchful Care is therefore very neceſſary in this our imperfect State, where with all our Diligence, 'tis difficult diſcerning the true Motives on which we daily act. 'Tis an ill ſign, when we are cold and negligent

gent in all such Duties, where we have only God for Witness, and no Worldly Respect to push us on: And then most vigorous, when Interest and Eyes of Men do give Encouragement: Tho' sometimes too, I question not, but Virtue makes use of these its Enemies, without much Injury: They are crooked Staves indeed, but yet in some degree may help us on; since the most exact Rules make use of *Fear* and *Shame*, for the Security of a regular and well-disciplin'd Life; and it may be allow'd the best to fortifie and defend themselves by these inferior Motives. We are to pursue Virtue indeed upon better grounds; but, on occasion, to take the Advantage of these Helps cannot be reprov'd; for this is only to make use of Earth for the gaining Heaven. Help us then, O God, in this our dangerous State; and since our own Insincerity, is the occasion of our having no certain Assurance of the Motives, on which we act; grant that this uncertainty may ever keep us Humble, and in a perpetual dependance on thy Grace; and tho' I may be ignorant of my own Ways, yet still preserve me in the right, that in pretending to what is commendable and virtuous, I may ever proceed according to Justice and Truth.

Nineteenth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 22. V. 1. ends V. 14.

HE *ſent his Servants to call to the Marriage, thoſe that were invited, and they would not come.* The whole Goſpel is a Parable, in which, under the Figure of a King inviting Gueſts to the Marriage of his Son, is expreſs'd the Goodneſs of God, calling all to the Faith of his Son made Man, and by this Faith, to be Gueſts at his Table, in the Poſſeſſion of Eternal Happineſs; and under the Figure of thoſe, who, being invited, neglected to come to the Marriage, is repreſented the unhappy Occaſion of their Miſery, who periſh; where tis plainly ſhewn, that 'tis thro' their own fault, in neglecting the Summons of Mercy, which calls upon them, and making ſuch things their hindrance, which ought not to be ſo. The Mercy of God here manifeſted, exacts from us a continual Homage of Adoration and Thanks, for that without any Motive on our parts,

parts, he has provided for our Happineſs, and call'd us to the Enjoyment of it, tho' wholly unworthy. The general Neglect on the part of Man, is that, which Challenges both our Tears and Confuſion; for that the accceptance of this Mercy being his Intereſt alone, and even his Eternal Intereſt, he is ſo ungratefully careleſs in it, as to put by this Concern for Momentary Trifles, ſuch as muſt ſoon be taken from him, and be the Occaſion of his Everlaſting Miſery, thro' the Injuſtice of his Choice. Happy we, if we could be ſo truly ſenſible of this Folly, this Day, as to let the Conſideration be the Means of preventing our being an Inſtance of it.

Of thoſe, who refus'd to go to the Marriage, Three Sorts are here mention'd; Firſt, One who went to his Country-houſe. Secondly, Another, who was buſied in his Traffick. Laſtly, Others who ſeiz'd and kill'd the Servants ſent to call them. In which are ſignified Three States in danger of living unmindful of God and Salvation, without regarding any Calls from Heaven. Firſt, The Soft, Idle and Voluptuous Life; where the only Concern is peaceably to enjoy Health, Goods, Conveniencies, good Cheer, publick Divertiſements, and private Pleaſures. Secondly, The buſie Life, taken up in multiplicity of

of Affairs, and gainful Employments; where the love of Riches, and earneſt application of the Mind to promiſing Occaſions, ſtifle all Thoughts of Salvation, and ſteal away the Time, which ought to be given to it. Laſtly, The unjuſt Life, that is, of ſuch, as live in profeſs'd Wickedneſs, who not only neglect the Ways of Salvation, but likewiſe expreſs their diſlike againſt thoſe, who are willing to open their Eyes, and put them into the Way of Truth.

Under theſe Three Heads are compriz'd all thoſe unhappy ones, who being deaf to the Invitations of Mercy, exclude themſelves for Ever from it; and being mention'd by Chriſt himſelf, ought to raiſe a Sollicitude in all Chriſtians, that they fall not under them. But this part of the Parable ſeeming to point at thoſe, who being call'd to the belief of Chriſt's Truth, that by a Union in Faith, they may be admitted to the participation of his Table; it ought principally to alarm thoſe, who having Reaſons enough to doubt of their being Members of this Society, upon worldly Motives forbear all farther enquiry, and thus fall under the Guilt of the Gueſts invited; who upon being hinder'd by like Excuſes, are here condemn'd, becauſe *they would not come*. It cannot be queſtion'd

queſtion'd, but that ſince Truth has not only its Difficulties, ſuch as are not to be overcome, but by the application of a ſincere and induſtrious Mind, but likewiſe lies under many Temporal Diſadvantages, ſo that the Profeſſion of it is generally accompanied with the loſs of Eſteem, as to the World, and with the hazard of Fortune too; it cannot be queſtion'd, I ſay, but many are eaſily perſwaded to ſtifle whatever Glimpſes or Beams of Light are deſign'd to call them to it, diſcourag'd by the difficulty or trouble, that appears in obeying ſuch a Summons.

Upon this account, how many are they, who, like *Agrippa*, are *almoſt perſwaded* to be what they ſhould be, but have not Courage to take one ſtep farther? How many, like *Felix*, have ſuch a Senſe of Truth, as even to tremble at it, or at the thought of their own Circumſtances, and yet, like him, want a *Convenient Seaſon* for hearing farther, and can never find it? How many, like *Demetrius* the Silverſmith, upon the proſpect of their being loſers by it, ſtand at a diſtance, and make an Intereſt againſt it? Too many there are, Followers of theſe unhappy Men, who ſtand out againſt the Invitations of Heaven, and againſt the Opportunities of better information, over-rul'd by variety of

of Paſſions, by Self-love, by the love of Eaſe, Convenience, Intereſt and Ambition, or ſo taken up with Buſineſs, or the Liberties of Life, that they cannot find a convenient Seaſon; and hence either contemn the Ways of Truth by the violent Impreſſions of a worldly Spirit, or by the Arguments of a byaſs'd Judgment, falſly perſwade themſelves of the Non-neceſſity of making a Change, upon the ſeeming Conviction of the Way of Truth being broad enough to include them in it, as they are. In this manner great numbers deceive themſelves: But ſince 'tis evident from this Goſpel, that many, who are call'd by God to ſit down at the Table of Chriſt, by ſuch Excuſes exclude themſelves for ever from it; have not all reaſon to make a ſtricter examen of their State, that ſo they incurr not the Guilt of Contemn'd Mercy, which they ſee here puniſh'd with ſuch Severity of an Eternal Baniſhment from Heaven? O God, how much eaſier is it to receive thy Truths, with all their preſent Inconveniencies, than to leave the Conviction to the Terrour of thy Judgments?

But the Subject of this Parable is of a greater Extent, ſince we ſee, in the Perſon of him, who, being admitted to the Banquet, was afterwards caſt out, for not

having a Wedding Garment, they alſo are concern'd, who are Gueſts at the Marriage, and united to Chriſt by Faith: So far, that if theſe have not their Nuptial Robe, that is, if they put not on the New Man, are not veſted with Charity, and live not by the Spirit of Chriſt, they ſhall be certainly caſt forth, and have their Eternal Portion with Unbelievers. 'Tis not therefore enough for Chriſtians to ſay, We have obey'd the Invitation; we are Gueſts at the Marriage of the Lamb with his Church; we are Catholicks: For what will it profit, to be Gueſts at this Banquet, when thoſe are thrown out, who come unprepar'd, or ſit there, under the Deformities of the Old Man, in a manner unbecoming the Sanctity of the Place? Let theſe then remember, that Faith without Charity will profit nothing; that Faith without good Works is dead; that tho' they have great Advantages in the Light of true Faith, and great Helps in being Members of Chriſt's Church; yet if theſe Advantages and Helps are all neglected, and they make no Benefit of theſe Favours receiv'd; their Account will be ſo much greater for the Mercies they have abus'd, and their Damnation will be deeper, than of thoſe, who have never known the Truth.

Thus

Thus then, while thoſe are ſhut out from Heaven, who refus'd to come; and thoſe too, who came to the Banquet unprepar'd; this makes too evident the Concluſion of our preſent Goſpel; That *many are call'd, but few choſen.* And ought not this awaken all manner of Chriſtians, ſo as neither to neglect the Invitation, nor yet to obey it, without being provided with a Wedding Garment; but to ſtrive, by Good Works, to make their Vocation and Election ſure? This is the Way preſcrib'd by Chriſt and his Apoſtles; much better than what many take, by preſumptuouſly enquiring into the Counſels and Decrees of God, and perplexing themſelves with this Queſtion; Whether they be of the number of the Elect? For this is what cannot be diſcover'd in this Life, and is nothing but a Snare, to take off Chriſtians from the practice of the Goſpel, by the unprofitable Speculations of a dangerous Curioſity. 'Tis enough for Chriſtians, that, whatever be the Decree of Predeſtination, yet theſe Certain Truths are left us for our Comfort and Encouragement; Firſt, That none ſhall want ſufficient Grace for their Salvation. Secondly, That none ſhall be Damn'd, but by their own fault. Laſtly, That 'tis in our own power to be Sav'd, if

we will. These Truths, which Faith has render'd Infallible to us, are enough to silence Curiosity, and to oblige us to a laborious Diligence, in pursuing those Ways and Means, which God has ordain'd for the obtaining Happiness: This will make sure, what is now in doubt, and place those that follow the Advice amongst the number of the Elect. This one thing, O God, I ask of thee, that neither Sloth, Self-love, or the love of any worldly Thing, may take me out of this way, which thou hast manifested to be thy Will. Thou hast been infinitely Merciful in Calling me: Grant, I may be ever found cloath'd in a Nuptial Robe, that so being admitted to the Banquet, I may never be cast out for my Unworthiness.

Twentieth Sunday *after* Pentecost.

EPISTLE,

Ephes. C. 5. V. 15. ends V. 21.

BE *not drunk with Wine, in which is Luxury, but be fill'd with the Holy Ghost.* Authority and Custom have given such

ſuch countenance to exceſſive Drinking, that making a Judgment from the common Practice of it, even in Men of Principles and Religion, one might be inclin'd to imagine it very conſiſtent with Chriſtianity and Salvation; and yet turning to St. *Paul*, we ſee it lye under another Character; nothing leſs than Damnation being entail'd on it; and all thoſe that follow it, being expreſly cut off from the Inheritance of Eternal Life: For neither *Thieves*, ſays he, *nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God*, 1 *Cor.* 6. 9, 10. Again, *The Works of the Fleſh are manifeſt; Envyings, Murders, Drunkenneſs, of which I tell you, as I have already declar'd to you, that they, who do ſuch things, ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God*, *Gal.* 5. 19, 20, 21. And therefore he enjoins all the Followers of Chriſt, *not to keep Company with any Man, that is call'd a Brother, and is a Fornicator, Covetous, or a Drunkard*, 1 *Cor.* 5. 11. And is it not ſomething ſurprizing, after theſe Woes pronounc'd againſt this Vice, to find Chriſtians ſo familiar with it, that to encourage and draw Men into it, is become a Friendly part of Entertainment; 'tis nothing but an ordinary Diverſion for paſſing ſpare Hours; and to declare their Guilt in this Point, has nothing of Scan-

dal or Defamation in it? 'Tis certain they have not a true Idea of this Evil; Custom has taken off the greatest part of its Horror; and tho' they Experience the most pernicious Effects of it in themselves, yet the insensibility, which this Vice ever brings along with it, is a great impediment to its Cure: And this is nothing but the Justice of its Punishment; that while Men purposely drown their own Reason, they should live on, like unreasonable Creatures, smarting under the Burthen of many heavy Inconveniencies, without seeking just means of Relief.

There's nothing but this wonderful stupidity, can carry Men on in this practice, attended with such an endless train of Mischiefs, whereby they are brought by degrees to neglect, if not wholly omit, all Spiritual Duties, to expose their Families to Disorder and Ruin, to let their Creditors perish for want, give ill Example to others, strengthen their own Evil Passions, and open a way to all manner of Wickedness, Irreligion and Prophaneness; so that in the end, the true Description of this their Christian Entertainment comes to be, the drinking down the Comfort of their Wives, the Provision of their Children and Relations, the Bread of the Poor, the Blood of Widows and Orphans,

and

and their own Damnation to themſelves: Theſe are the true Ingredients of their Cups, theſe make up the Subject of their Mirth and Huzza's; their Glaſſes run over with Injuſtice, Cruelty and Impiety; ſo that *Balthaſſar*'s prophaning the Veſſels of the Temple, was but a poor ſhadow of theſe Meetings, which confound all that is Sacred, and carry with them repeated Abominations and Deſolations. And tho' all riſe not to this Exceſs, yet if we conſider the ordinary Method of ſuch as are more moderate, and ſee, what a general miſ-ſpending there is of their Time and Money, how unprofitably they live, how they dull their Spirits, indiſpoſe themſelves for Prayer, omit the Duties of their Family, expoſe themſelves to variety of ſinful Diſcourſes, and by degrees waſte their Eſtates, we may eaſily diſcover, even in theſe, a ſort of malignity, which, like a Canker, gnaws out the very Bowels of the Goſpel. For while this is calling aloud upon Chriſtians to Watch and Pray, to deny themſelves, to take up their Croſs, to crucifie the Fleſh with all its Luſts, to die to the World, to put on the New Man, to bring forth worthy Fruits of Penance, to redeem the Time, to give what is ſuperfluous to the Poor, to be ever prepar'd for the laſt Hour; their

common practice is so contrary to this in every Point, that instead of following, as they are commanded, they rather seem to evacuate all the Maxims of Christ and his Apostles.

And yet these are the Christians of our Times, these are the Men, who are encompass'd, above others, with the Blessings of Plenty, and the Dew of Heaven: This is the grateful Return they make for all they have receiv'd; thus they practice Self-denials, and prepare for Eternity; living a Reproach to their Religion, a Scandal to Christianity; and what a presumptuous Expectation of a Miraculous Grace must they look for, if they think of dying better than they have liv'd? And were this the Case only of some few, it were not so much to be lamented; but to reflect, that this Evil is spread on all sides; that 'tis so common, that a Sober Man must either live buried at home, without Conversation; or run the hazard of this Shipwrack, if he ventures abroad; that they are not contented with their own Misfortune, but are ever soliciting and importuning, till they have communicated their Evil, and made their Friends as Vicious as themselves; this is a thing deserves the Prayers and Tears of all good Christians, and ought to excite in those Gen-

Gentlemen, who live in the Circumſtances, a Zeal of reclaiming their Countrey from the Infamy of this Brutiſh Exceſs. Thoſe who are truly ſenſible of their own repeated Tranſgreſſions, and the ill Example they have given in this Point, can no ways make a juſter Recompence of their paſt Extravagancies, than by now countenancing Moderation and Sobriety, and ſo far by their Example encouraging it, as forthwith to quit all thoſe, who promote the practice of their wonted Exceſſes; that as far as formerly they have contributed to the propagation of this Vice, they may now labour for its Reformation. And would not thoſe Worthy Perſons do Service to themſelves and their Neighbours, who being not yet infected with this Evil, would reſolutely ſtand to their Principles of Sobriety, and never permit themſelves to be overcome by the unreaſonable importunity of Friends? A Courage in this particular, would be gallant, and very becoming the Profeſſors of the Goſpel: And tho' it might be expos'd for the preſent, to the Reproaches of ſome wet Jeſts, yet all theſe would ſoon be wip'd off; and thoſe very Perſons would commend, when Sober, what over their Cups they have rail'd at as unſociable and ridiculous. 'Tis but once

or twice with resolution declaring their Minds, and stoutly standing to it, and they are for ever secure; when yielding but once puts them ever in danger, by discovering that weakness, that they may be overcome: And who does not see, 'tis much easier standing their ground at first, than no retire, when once drawn in? 'Tis by a weak compliance many have been irrecoverably lost, by engaging in an Evil, they have at first detested; and the thoughts of withdrawing at a seasonable time, have only serv'd to ensnare them into the extremity of mischief, and put them upon being Promoters of what they began with dislike. This therefore is not the way: No, it must be a certain steddiness of mind, immovable in all Attempts, must here be expected to gain the Point; and, I question not, were there an Association of some resolute Souls, to undertake the Cause of Sobriety, they would soon find Encouragement in their Success. By this way, all Sober Conversation would be countenanc'd, Gentlemen of moderate Temper might live with some Credit in the Country, and not be oblig'd to abandon their Houses, for fear of ill Company; more Honourable Diversions might be encourag'd, and no necessity of becoming Sots, to make themselves

ſelves fit Company for Neighbours and Gentlement; Religion and Morality might by degrees be promoted, and ſome Diſpoſitions laid for being filled with the Holy Ghoſt: For truly till this Vice be reform'd, there can be no Habitation for this Divine Gueſt. Do thou then, O Powerful Mover, inſpire ſome Chriſtian Breaſts with theſe generous Thoughts of ſtanding againſt the Torrent, that ſo Chriſtianity, which could never be worſted by Perſecution, may not now ſhamefully be drunk out of Doors.

Twentieth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Joh. C. 4. V. 46. ends V. 53.

HEaring that *Jeſus was come from* Jury *into* Galilee, *he went to him, and ask'd him to go down, and heal his Son.* This whole Goſpel is the Relation of a Miracle, wrought by Chriſt, upon the Son of this Ruler, who made this Petition to him. The Sickneſs of his Son was that, which carried him to Chriſt, and

and thus, that which he lamented as his Misfortune at home, was the firſt Step to his Happineſs. The peaceable Enjoyment of what we love is the general Wiſh of all, and meaſuring Happineſs by the Maxims of Self-love and the World, we then think all goes well, when the Succeſs anſwers our Wiſhes. But our Blindneſs and Corruption being ſuch, that we generally abuſe preſent Bleſſings, and in our Enjoyments lay the Seeds of Eternal Miſery, either by the Forgetfulneſs of God, and the Life to come, or by making them the Subject of Criminal Exceſſes; this often obliges God, if he has yet Mercy left for us, to interrupt our preſent Peace, and by what we call Afflictions, put us in the way of preventing our being Eternally Miſerable.

This is the Deſign of Providence, in mixing the Sweets of this Life with Bitterneſs; that the Chriſtian Soul, being taught by Diſappointments, may raiſe up his Deſires towards a more laſting Happineſs, and by the uncertainties of Changeable Goods, learn to ſeek for a State, which is Unchangeable. The Example then of this Ruler going to Chriſt, when he ſaw his Son now at the point of Death, ought to be an Inſtruction to Chriſtians, to make a like uſe of all Afflictions,

ctions. His ſick Son carried him to Chriſt; their Afflictions ought to carry them to the ſame Refuge. Then it is, inſtead of yielding to any Sullen or Complaining Paſſion, they ought to conclude all Worldly Satisfactions to be vain, condemn their paſt Folly, in building upon a Foundation, that could not bear, reſolve upon preventing the like Miſcarriage, by the Diſcretion of a more moderate Spirit, and at preſent ſeek Comfort there, where is no danger of the like Uncertainty. By this way all Misfortunes and preſent Uneaſineſs would lead to an Eternal Good, and Heaven would be the Fruit of Unhappineſs.

And how happy would Chriſtians be, if they could come to the Practice of this Leſſon! And how unwiſe, if they do not daily ſtudy it! Misfortunes come frequent in this Life to thoſe, who are beſt fenc'd againſt them; others meet them oftner; ſome live amongſt them, and none can pretend to an Exemption. And muſt it not then be a notorious Indiſcretion in them, not to learn the Practice of that, which comes ſo often in their way: Which, if once learnt, might be ſo much for their Preſent Eaſe, and Eternal Advantage; and the want of it muſt be the certain Encreaſe

creaſe of preſent Miſery, and put them in hazard of that which is Everlaſting? Is not this a parallel Folly to theirs, who being in want of Bread, and all Neceſſaries, and having a certain Coin in their Poſſeſſion, which might abundantly ſupply them in their preſent Neceſſities, and ſecure them againſt future Poverty, ſhould go on ſmarting under their Wants, and loſe all the Benefit of what they have in their Hands, becauſe they will not be ſo Induſtrious, as to know the Value of what they have, and enquire how to put it off? The Caſe is the ſame, and too plain for Chriſtians to conſider, without Reproach and Confuſion.

What therefore are they to do? They are to conſider every trouble, of whatever kind it be, as a Monitor or Meſſenger, which bids them go to Chriſt, firſt, to ſeek his Help, as this Ruler did, preſſing their Petition to him with an Earneſtneſs like his; and with ſuch Perſeverance, as, again like him, not to be diſcourag'd, if they ſeem to be rejected, and in the Continuance of the Evil, ſee nothing but Motives of Deſpair; becauſe Prayer and Faith in ſuch dejecting Circumſtances, moſt powerfully prevail with God for their Relief.

But their principal way of then going to Chriſt, ought to be, in the Endeavour

vours of coming near him, in the Reſemblance of his Spirit and Life. He, who had all things in his Power, made choice of the Croſs, and his Life was a Preparation to it, in all manner of Sufferings, Contempts and Humiliations; and ſince it is the Honour of a Diſciple, to follow the Steps of his Maſter, it ought to be their Endeavours, when God puts them in the Circumſtances, to be contented, and even pleas'd, that they are in the State of their Maſter, that is, in a State of Suffering, in a State, which ſeparates them from the Enjoyments of Life, and renders them Miſerable and Contemptible, in regard of this World.

This Diſpoſition they ought to ſtrengthen in their Hearts, by the Conſideration, that God being Infinite in his Eſſential Perfections, and likewiſe in the Bleſſings beſtowed on them, all Honour, Praiſe, Adoration, and Happineſs, are due to him alone; but that they being nothing but Imperfection, Corruption and Miſery; that they have committed Infinite Offences, and are ſtill expos'd to as many more, if not prevented by Grace; what can be due to them, but only to be made the Scorn of Men, to ſuffer Affronts, Diſgraces, Diſtempers of Mind and Body, Darkneſs, Oppreſſions; to be afflicted and perſecuted by all Creatures, as Executioners

oners of the Divine Juſtice? This is what they muſt acknowledge their due; and muſt not then the love of Juſtice ſo far prevail upon all Natural Inclinations, as to oblige them to ſubmit to the Execution of it, and even to make them rejoice in the Occaſions of being brought to the lively Senſe of their Miſery, and of being more Humble and Abject in their own Eyes?

Whilſt therefore it muſt be acknowledg'd an Effect of Impatience and Pride, immoderately to grieve or complain under Troubles; a more peaceable Submiſſion muſt be the Fruit of an Humble Spirit, ſuch as, ſenſible of its own unworthineſs, is willing to make a Sacrifice of all to God, and is therefore pleas'd in the Opportunity of doing it. And this being the Spirit, which approaches towards that of Chriſt, it is in this manner, when Troubles afflict, Chriſtians ought to uſe their beſt Endeavours for coming as near him, as they can.

If they find a difficulty in it, as it muſt neceſſarily be to Corrupt Nature, let them conſider it, as an unhappy Infirmity, which ſtands in need of Chriſt's help, and therefore go to him in behalf of themſelves, and ſollicite for their Cure. Let it be one part of their daily Prayers, to beg

beg of God a Patient and Humble Spirit, that they may bear all Troubles in the Spirit of Chriſt. And if any preſent Dejection makes them ſuſpect all their Prayers as fruitleſs, and that God will not hear them, let them look on this Ruler, and take Courage from the Mercy ſhew'd to him. He made his Addreſs, 'tis true, to Chriſt, but with how great Imperfections, whilſt he preſſes for the Health of his Son, and is not concern'd for his Soul; while he demands a Miracle for his Cure, has a falſe Idea of the Omnipotence of God, and is yet weak in Faith! And yet with theſe Imperfections, Chriſt favours his Petition, and not only heals his Son, as he was ask'd, but adds to this a much greater Mercy, in giving the Life of Faith to him and his whole Family.

May not Chriſtians hence learn to raiſe their Hopes above what they ſee in themſelves, by grounding their Confidence on the Infinite Goodneſs of God, who knows how to give, not only more than we ask, but likewiſe beyond all we can poſſibly deſerve? Could we pray without Imperfections, it would be a great Temptation to Pride, and to confide too much in our ſelves: But as it is, having done our beſt, we have nothing wherein to truſt, but in God alone, and that is, where it ſhould be.

be. And ſince we ſee our Imperfections do not obſtruct his Mercies, tho' we are always bound to lament our Weakneſſes, and ſincerely labour to overcome them, yet they ought to be no Motive to us of Deſpair, ſince our Hope is not to be proportion'd to what is in us, but to what is in God. Upon this Foundation are Chriſtians to perſevere in Prayer, even when the diſcouraging Suggeſtions of a Melancholly or Dejected Spirit tells them, that God will not hear, and to practice the Leſſon of *Abraham*'s Faith, by hoping even againſt Hope; that is, when Darkneſs lets them ſee no grounds of Hope, and this is the Hope of Faith. Thus, O God, has thy Mercy taught us to reſt with Confidence in Thee. May this Confidence, O Jeſus, ſupport me under all Afflictions, that when theſe hang with a heavy weight upon my Spirit, I may ſtill find Comfort in Thee. May I then ſeek and run to Thee with moſt earneſtneſs, when I want Thee moſt; and tho' I know my ſelf many ways imperfect, yet permit me not, I beſeech Thee, to indulge my Imperfections, nor live in thy Diſpleaſure by wilful Sin, and then nothing ſhall deſtroy that Hope I ought to have in Thee.

Twenty-first Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE,

Epheſ. C. 6. V. 10. ends V. 17.

PUT *on the Armour of God, that you may be able to ſtand againſt the Snares of the Devil.* A Chriſtian's Life is a Combat, not to end but with Death; a Combat not only with Fleſh and Blood, but with Devils, whoſe Nature is Spiritual, whoſe Number is prodigious, whoſe Power is terrible, whoſe Kingdom is of a great extent, whoſe Artifices are ſubtle, whoſe Malice is conſummate, who make their Attempts at all times, in all places, and in all manners; ſo that no Retirement or Walls, which ſhut out the World, can be a Security againſt their Snares. There's no ſhelter but in God alone; and yet ſo, that even they, who fly under the ſhadow of his Wings, ſhall not be privileg'd from variety of Aſſaults; but however, putting on his Armour, is the only means of being Victorious over theſe Infernal Enemies. Such Chriſtians therefore as neglect their

Duties

Duties to God, pray but ſeldom, and even then give up their Minds to all diſtracting Trifles that occurr, muſt not wonder, if they often Experience the Devil's Malice in ſinful Suggeſtions, and their own Weakneſs in yielding to them: For tho' God has promis'd to help thoſe, who are in Diſtreſs, yet 'tis promis'd to ſuch only as call upon him; tho' there's an Aſſurance given, that he will not permit us to be tempted above our Strength; yet this regards thoſe only, who are Faithful in his Service, and with earneſtneſs ſollicite Heaven for Aſſiſtance, whereby they may be prepar'd againſt all Attempts. If then there be a neglect of God, a Life careleſs and tepid, bent on Eaſe and Pleaſure, and little ſenſible of their own Infirmity, and the neceſſary Dependance they have on the Divine Succours, what wonder, if ſuch become a prey to the Enemy, and are made a part of his Triumphs? It muſt be imputed to their own Negligence, that they meet with Trials above their Strength, and are ſo often overcome, ſince they ſeek not to put on the Armour of God, which is their only Defence.

There muſt be a lively Faith too, which is to ſerve them as a Buckler; a Faith of thoſe Eternal Goods of the next Life. The Expectation of theſe, is to raiſe

raiſe their Hearts to a Contempt of all the paſſing Flatteries of Concupiſcence, and ſupport them under the weight of Evils. He that firmly believes an Everlaſting Happineſs to come, will be ever willing to ſuffer ſomething for it: He'll cheerfully abandon what Delights here; and think it no ill Exchange, when he reflects, that the Eternal Poſſeſſion of God is to be the Recompence of ſuch Self-denials. We daily ſee what wonderful Effects the Proſpect of Worldly Intereſt, or Reſt, produces; with what Patience Men go thro' great Hardſhips; how eaſily they deny themſelves even their moſt Favourite Pleaſures, and ſtand untir'd againſt Repeated Injuries and Provocations, when they have but ſome Temporal Advantage in their Eye. The ſame are the Effects of a Vigorous and Active Faith; the Glory of the Bleſſed ſo much eclipſes all the Greatneſs of whatever is Valuable or Delightful here below, that the Privation of it ſeems not conſiderable; and ordinary Sufferings and Self-denials are a very eaſie Purchaſe of ſo laſting a Bleſſing. Thus Faith ſerves for a Buckler, and covering the Soul, defends it againſt all the Devil makes uſe of here, that is either Charming or Terrifying.

But

But the Word of God is to be the Sword, or Offensive Weapon, by which the Enemy is to be put to flight. Christ in three Assaults, repuls'd the Devil with three Passages of Holy Writ, for our Example; This is the Sacred Expedient, by which God establishes his Kingdom in our Souls, and overthrows the Devils. Happy then is that Soul, that in time of Temptation stands thus arm'd; and when the Enemy makes his Attempts, can meet him thus provided. 'My Help 'is from our Lord. Let my God arise, 'and my Enemies be put to flight. O 'God, incline unto my aid; O Lord, 'make haste to help me. Thou art my 'Helper in Tribulation; protect me un-'der the Shadow of thy Wings. Our 'Lord is my Light, and my Salvation, 'whom shall I fear? Our Lord is the 'Protector of my Life, who shall make 'me tremble? If whole Armies stand 'against me, my Heart shall not fear. 'How long, O Lord, dost thou forget 'me? How long shall the Enemy be ex-'alted against me? Have regard to me, 'and hear me, my God; enlighten my 'Eyes, that I sleep not in Death; that my 'Enemy may never say, I have prevail'd 'against him. Arise, to my Help, O 'Lord, and say to my Soul, I am thy 'Salvation, *&c.* Thus

Thus the Christian is to secure himself, by putting on the Armour of God; and if he be ever thus prepar'd, let him not fear: For if the Devil's Malice seems endless and untir'd, his Courage is to be so too; and what then can hurt him? He is not to be discourag'd on this score, but persevere to the end, in hopes of a Crown. Dejection of Spirit, and the Anxiety of a disquieted Mind, is not the least Temptation, and therefore as stoutly to be resisted as any other of a fouler Aspect. Whom the Devil cannot overcome by Force, he endeavours to tire out by Importunity: If he cannot prevail, for the breaking the Commandments, he's content to disturb the keeping them. But the Providence of God has a Design of Mercy in the Permission of this lasting War: He knows, that frequent Trials are the Exercise of Virtue; that the Mind is awaken'd, and render'd more active by Opposition; that by Dangers 'tis made sensible of its own Weakness, and total Dependance it has on God, is kept in a perpetual State of Humility, and push'd on to seek Help from above. Were it not for this necessity of Divine Succours, it would fall, by the weight of Corrupt Nature, into the most dangerous of all Temptations, that is, of performing

all

all the Actions of Piety, without any Interior Feeling; with Tepidity and Indifferency: This is but too often the ill effect of Peace. Christians, like Seamen, being too apt to sleep in a Calm, when a Storm makes them watchful and laborious.

Let not then the Pious Soul be discourag'd under the severest Trials; God has so order'd it for his Eternal Good; 'tis his Duty to go on under the Appointments of Heaven: His Care indeed ought to be, to avoid all Occasions, and never voluntarily expose himself to Danger; in this Case he has Reason to fear, that God may leave him to himself, in Punishment of his Rashness, or his Neglect; for tho' Christ stretch'd forth his Hand to *Peter*, walking on the Water, in Reward of his Zeal, and his Faith; yet Negligence or Presumption can never expect this Priviledge of the Divine Assistance, when by these Men are blindly carried on to walk upon Precipices. But, in all other Cases, let Courage, and a Confidence in God, keep up the Christian's Heart: Christ himself was tempted for our Instruction, and to inform us, that no degree of Holiness is secure: The Blessed in Heaven have pass'd thro' great Temptations, and by these their Fidelity, has been

been tried like Gold in the Fire. If thou art tried too, remember to be Faithful, put on the Armour of God, and ſtand it out; run to Chriſt, like the Apoſtles in the Storm; and if he ſeems not to hear, 'tis only to add ſtill greater Fervour to thy Prayers. *Si moram fecerit, expecta illum, quia veniens veniet & non tardabit.* Call on him, and deſpair not; for none ſhall be confounded, that put their truſt in him. 'Tis an uneaſie Life to a Soul that ſeeks God, to be diſturb'd with endleſs Temptations; but 'tis an Uneaſineſs more to Self-love, which deſires quiet, than to the Love of God, which is content in being exercis'd. 'Tis the next, and not this, is the Life of Reſt: Here thou art to fight and overcome, that thou may'ſt be Crown'd hereafter. Fight then on, that at the laſt Hour, thou may'ſt have the Comfort of ſaying with St. *Paul*, *Bonum certamen certavi*, I have fought a good fight, and there is laid up for me a Crown of Juſtice.

Twenty-first Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 18. V. 23. to the end.

ONE *was brought to him, that ow'd him Ten Thouſand Talents.* In the Perſon of the Servant, mention'd in this Parable, thus deeply endebted to his King, are repreſented to us, not only great and ſcandalous Sinners, but all Men in general; ſo that there is no Perſon, who ought not to acknowledge himſelf, thus ſtanding Charg'd with infinite Debts in regard of God. For the end of the Parable being to make all ſenſible of the Obligation they have, of remitting or pardoning whatever others are endebted to them; and this being general, the reaſon here brought by Chriſt for preſſing them to it, muſt be underſtood ſo too: That is, that if God would treat us, according to the rigour of Juſtice, he has a Right of Charging us with infinite Faults. And that this Sentiment may be ſincere, it cannot be unſeaſonable, on this Day, to make Reflection

flection on ſome general Heads, which may convince Chriſtians of the number of their Sins, or rather ſhew them to be without number.

Firſt then, for Example, how many are the Sins of every one in particular, in their Time ſpent unprofitably; whilſt that, which was granted by God, for working out their Salvation, has been prodigally waſted in vain Amuſements, which, if no otherwiſe Evil, have diverted the Mind, at leaſt, from better Thoughts; ſince the more it is buſied in what is vain, the leſs Sollicitous it is in what is neceſſary?

Secondly, How many are the Sins, by letting Paſſion have the influence in what they do, and not Reaſon; in acting for themſelves, without referring what they do to God, or being carried on by the Motive of ſome private Intereſt, and not of Juſtice?

Thirdly, How many, in vain, indiſcreet and unprofitable Words, ſeeking to pleaſe Men, to gain their Eſteem, or to leſſen others, and this how often under the cover of pretended Piety or Charity?

Fourthly, How many, in ſecret Scandals given to their Neighbour, by imprinting in his Mind the Image of their Paſſions and Falſe Judgments; and by

carrying on Diſcourſes before him, not proportion'd to his Circumſtances, but weakning his Soul, and diſpoſing it to Sin?

Fifthly, How many, by the Omiſſion of many Opportunities of advancing in Virtue, and doing Good to their Neighbour; and this occaſion'd by Sloth, Neglect, Affection, or ſome other Paſſion, which over-rules in ſuch Caſes?

Sixthly, How many, by Ingratitude under the daily Bleſſings of God, whilſt they acknowledge the Mercy no more, than if they were their due?

Seventhly, How many, by the Neglects, Irreverence and Diſtractions, mix'd with their Prayers, ariſing from their Paſſions not ſubdued?

Eighthly, How many, by abuſing the Grace of God, his Sacraments, his Truths and Inſtructions, which he gives them in a Thouſand different ways?

Ninthly, How many, by the ill uſe of the Chaſtiſements, God ſends them, when, inſtead of Diſcharging the Old Debts, as they ought, they Contract New Ones by their Impatience?

Laſtly, How many, even in the good Actions they do, by the Humane Reſpects beginning and carrying them on, and by the Pride, too often following, accompanied

panied with the Contempt of others? And if there be reaſon to be apprehenſive on the account of what is eſteem'd Virtue, how much more is there to fear, upon the account of the Evil, to which all are ſubject?

This then being the confeſs'd State of all Chriſtians, what muſt they do under this weighty Charge, but have recourſe to the Patience of God? *Patientiam habe:* And without having any Confidence in themſelves, or in any Compenſation they can make by pretended good Works, caſt themſelves wholly upon the Goodneſs of God, and ſo hope to move him to Mercy; this Senſe of their Poverty, accompanied with proportion'd Humility, being moſt powerful for this end, and the beſt Expedient for Sinners to find Comfort under the weight of their Iniquities?

But are they not to add to this Petition, the Promiſe made by this Servant; *Have Patience, and I will pay thee all?* 'Tis certain, Sinners ought to claim no Right to the Grace of God, but depend wholly on the pure Mercy of God. But at the ſame time, they are to have a ſincere Deſire of ſatisfying the Juſtice of God offended, by Works of Penance, which they ought to reſolve to do all their Lives. This Deſire, and this Will, has nothing of Pre-

ſumption, becauſe it places no other Value in ſuch Works, but what they have from their Union with the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt. They are to deſire therefore to make Satisfaction to God; not in pretending to offer him a Price ſufficient of it ſelf, and as ſeparate from the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt for the Diſcharge of their Debt; but in obſerving the Law, which they knew God has eſtabliſh'd; to wit, That all Sins are to be puniſh'd by the Juſtice, either of God, or of the Penitent Sinner. 'Tis true, the greateſt Penances a Sinner can undertake, are not in the leaſt capable, of themſelves, for cancelling Sin, but only thro' the Merits of Jeſus Chriſt; but Jeſus Chriſt applies the Price of his Blood, only to thoſe, who are in a Diſpoſition of doing ſerious Penance: *Niſi Penitentiam egeritis, omnes ſimiliter peribitis: If you do not Penance, you ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* This is a Means ordain'd by God, for partaking of the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt, and for obtaining of him the Remiſſion of Sins. There can be no Preſumption then in ſubmitting to this Law; but it muſt be a great one, to diſpenſe with it; ſince 'tis making void, in great part, the end of Chriſt's Paſſion, who, as St. *Paul* ſays, ſuffer'd for us, leaving us an Example, that we may follow his Steps; and who can juſtifie the

not

not following them, or plead for an exemption, but by ſetting up againſt him in what he has propos'd, ordain'd and commanded?

In practiſing therefore this Penance thus requir'd for the payment of their Debts, Chriſtians do not leſs depend on their only Support, the Mercy of God; becauſe they have no hope of Grace for performing ſuch Penance, but from the Divine Mercy: God diſpenſes not with their payment; but gives them wherewith to pay; and hence the Will of not paying, is Eſſentially contrary to the Remiſſion of Sins: Upon which grounds it is the Church has declar'd *Satisfaction* to be one part of the Sacrament of Penance. The occaſion therefore of the Oppoſition ſome make againſt this Doctrine, is, becauſe they do not diſtinguiſh Penitential Works, from the Price and Value of ſuch Works. They imagine, God demands not the Fruits of Penance, becauſe there is nothing, but the Merits of Chriſt, which has proportion to the greatneſs of our Sins; but do not conſider, that tho', in effect, the Pardon of Sin is not obtain'd, but by the Blood of Chriſt, and the ſole Grace of God, yet that theſe Merits and Grace are applied to Men by certain Means, which are enliven'd by Grace, and have

their whole Price and Value from the Merits of Christ. We acknowledge, with them, that Christ's Blood makes entire Satisfaction to the Justice of God; but 'tis our Business still, by Works of Charity and Penance, to have this in particular applied to us. What therefore we are to fear, is not, that we shall not have wherewith to pay our Debts, but rather, that we shall neglect the Opportunities of doing it, which God puts into our Hands; as we see in the Servant here mention'd, refusing to release the inconsiderable Debt, which his Companion ow'd him.

In which passage is plainly demonstrated, that the Mercy of God, and Infinite Merits of Christ's Passion, will avail us nothing, except we, by a Charitable Condescendence, forgive every one our Neighbour, whatever Offences he has committed against us; and what is requir'd, is not only to forgive him in Words, or in Appearance, but sincerely from our Hearts. This being a Condition so expressly requir'd by Christ, for obtaining Pardon of our Sins, is it not our Common Interest, to see that we find no pretexts for dispensing with it, that so, when we come to appear before our Lord, we may not have the Terrour of our whole Debt, which we suppos'd forgiven, standing in full against

gainſt us? Let thoſe then conſider it, who ſay, they cannot forgive ſuch Injuries and Provocations: And thoſe too, who ſay, they have forgiven, and yet cannot ſpeak peaceably to the Parties concern'd, ſpeak ever peeviſhly of them, put the worſt Conſtruction on all that belongs to them, are pleas'd in the ill Opinion others have of them, and in all that happens to make them uneaſie: Theſe are ill Symptoms, enough to ſuſpect, that Gall and Bitterneſs ſtill lye at the Heart: And have not they then reaſon to give no reſt to themſelves, till they have brought all into a more ſettled and ſincere Peace; ſince they have here the Aſſurance, that if they forgive not their Neighbours from their Hearts, they muſt expect no peace with God? Thus, O Jeſus, thou haſt taught us, and ſince we cannot doubt of the Truth, grant we may have ſuch a Senſe of the multitude of our own Sins, and of the Mercy we want, as to be Sollicitous in obtaining it; and that we may never be ſo perverſly blind, as to exclude our ſelves from the Mercy thou offer'ſt, by being unmerciful to our Brethren, and turning away thy Pardon from us, by refuſing to pardon them.

Twenty-ſecond Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE,

Philip. C. 1. V. 6. ends V. 11.

THIS I pray for, that your Charity may more and more abound in knowleage, and in all underſtanding, that you may approve the better things. Thoſe Chriſtians, who apprehend how great Difficulty there is in approving and chuſing what is beſt, and to how many Miſcarriages ſuch a Choice is expos'd, eaſily underſtand the Apoſtle's Zeal for the *Philippians*, in making this Prayer for them, That their Charity may ſtill encreaſe in all Knowledge for the diſcerning that which is beſt. For truly, if Almighty God gives not a Bleſſing for the Encreaſe of Knowledge rooted in Charity, 'twill be very eaſie miſtaking in the Choice of what is good. If the Heart of Man, inſtead of being animated with Charity, be corrupted with Paſſion, the Light of Reaſon, Juſtice, and Truth, is not ſufficient to direct it; for Paſſion ſo obſcures, if

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not wholly darkens this Light, that it violently puſhes on the Soul to make uſe of all its Natural Abilities, to the perverting or invalidating the ſtrongeſt and moſt evident Motives to all good: It cauſes a certain blindneſs in the Heart, ſo much more unfortunate than that of the Body, that it makes a Man in love with his Darkneſs, and deſire to abide in it; it makes him hate the Light, and be afraid of ſeeing it; ſets him againſt all the Charitable Offers of Direction, ſo as with inſolence to oppoſe thoſe, who would hinder him from thoſe Precipices, which are before him; and has thoſe very Symptoms of Madneſs, as to think all thoſe blind, who are not like himſelf.

The prodigious Effects of this we ſee in the Phariſees, upon whom thus prepoſſeſs'd, all the evidence of Chriſt's Miracles work'd nothing to the opening their Eyes; but only put them upon making wrong Conſtructions of every thing he did, and finding out Expedients to defend themſelves and others againſt the force of his Light; and being thus raſhly carried on by Paſſion, inſtead of being mov'd by Charity, they were ſo far from chuſing what was beſt, that they ran headlong into an Abyſs of Error and Wickedneſs.

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This is what ought to be a Terrour to all Chriſtians; and yet there are ſtill other degrees of it, tho' much inferior to this, with great Sollicitude to be avoided by them. For 'tis not only the Malicious Paſſion of the Jews is an obſtruction in the choice of Good; but every Degree of it, every Affection of the Mind, that is not rooted in Charity, is generally attended with the ſame ill Conſequence, and ought to make Chriſtians very apprehenſive in the Choice they make; leſt being influenc'd by ſome diſorder of the Heart, they be led out of the way to ſomething that is unjuſt or unreaſonable. *Education* and *Cuſtom* it ſelf, is enough to cauſe this Darkneſs, and indiſpoſe the Soul for the diſcerning what is right and juſt: But, as for *Intereſt*, *Favour*, *Diſlike*, *Ambition*, *Covetouſneſs*, *Fear*, *Self-love*, &c. the ill Effects of theſe are wonderful in this kind; and 'tis ſtrange to conſider, what a thick Cloud theſe caſt upon Reaſon, and totally hinder it in the approbation and choice of what is right: So that if a Chriſtian be not mindful, in joining with St. *Paul*, to Petition of God a *large encreaſe of Charity, in Knowledge and all Underſtanding*, he is in evident danger of being miſled by theſe falſe Lights, to the choice of what is contrary to his greateſt Intereſt, and is rather

ther the Effect of ſome Paſſion, than his Reaſon.

Hence the ordinary Method of Chriſtians is much to be lamented, who in the choice of what is moſt important to them, are ſo little concern'd in taking God's help along with them, but generally put themſelves under the Conduct of ſome Paſſion for their direction; and ſo, for the diſcerning more clearly in the choice they make, moſt abſurdly begin, in chuſing Darkneſs rather than Light. 'Tis thus in that choice, which is made for Life; when a Married State is reſolv'd on, and ſo much depends on the choice of the Perſon, that not only the Temporal but Eternal Comfort is evidently hazarded, if this be ill made; one would think, none would ever venture on this, without having firſt earneſtly ſollicited Heaven for its Aſſiſtance and Direction in this Caſe: And yet how contrary is the practice; when many times, there's nothing more than the violence of a ſuddain Paſſion, rais'd from ſome external agreeableneſs, which determines the Point, without any knowledge of more ſolid Qualifications, neceſſary for diſcharging the Duties of that State? And if more time be taken by others to deliberate the Caſe, 'tis ſeldom with the knowledge of

Charity,

Charity, which is alone capable of directing for the beſt; but generally moſt ſordid and vain Principles have the powerful influence, and preſide in the choice. The enquiry is about Money, Dignity and Place; if theſe anſwer Expectation, the Buſineſs goes on; and as for the Chriſtian Dowry of Piety, Moderation, Virtue, Patience and Peace, this is either diſpens'd with, or a very general account ſerves the turn: So that if the Temporal Circumſtances do but ſatisfie, the Eternal are put to the venture. And 'tis moſt unaccountable, into what perplexing Inconveniencies many caſt themſelves by this raſhneſs; on the proſpect of ſome inviting Bait, either of Money or Honour, ſacrificing all their Reſt, Comfort, and Conſcience, by tying themſelves to ſuch Perſons, whoſe known Irregularity, Prodigality and Vice, cuts off all hopes of thoſe more deſirable Goods. But how can it be otherwiſe, when in an Affair of this Conſequence, they have no other guidance, but of ſome brutiſh and vain Paſſion; they firſt blind themſelves, and then go on in a way, where none can go ſafely, but who have God to direct them? And this, I queſtion not, is the true ground of ſo many unhappy Marriages, of ſuch Diſorders in Families, of Children

dren neglected, or barbarouſly Educated, and of Eſtates waſted.

The ſame ill Method is too much practis'd by Parents, in diſpoſing of their Children, and by Children in regard of the ſtate of Life which they chuſe. The only thing conſider'd is *Profit* and *Honour*; where there appears the moſt promiſing hopes of theſe, there's no need of farther Conſideration, the Buſineſs is concluded; tho' the Principal Point is yet unthought on, which is, How far each State is proper for them in a Chriſtian way, and moſt conſiſtent with their Salvation? But this is generally neglected; and hence it is, that ſo many are promoted to Church Dignities, and to the ſtate of Religion, with no other Call, but that of Intereſt, Honour, or Conveniency; and taking ſuch Burthens on them, which they are unfit to bear, they ſink under them into moſt Scandalous Liberties or Neglects; and I wiſh it prove not in the end, that by their own or their Parents raſhneſs, they have choſen their own Damnation. Hence again it is, that on Worldly Proſpects only, without any regard to an Eternal Well-being, other States and Employments are ſought for, and made choice of, which are evidently dangerous, if not wholly inconſiſtent with future Happineſs: There

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are but too many of theſe, ſo very corrupt in themſelves, or expos'd to ſuch variety of Frauds and Injuſtices, to make them turn to account, that they are nothing better than Snares to the Undertakers; and there can be no other reaſon of ſo many running into them, but this Fundamental Neglect, of not chuſing according to the knowledge of Charity. The ſame 'tis in chuſing of Maſters and Services, and almoſt every thing we reſolve on: 'Tis Humour, Paſſion, Intereſt, Self-love, *&c.* determine the choice, and, I fear, command too much in all we do. And, O God, to how many Miſcarriages, both Eternal and Temporal, are we expos'd, by putting our ſelves under the Conduct of ſuch blind Guides, and neglecting thee, by whoſe Bleſſing alone we are to ſucceed in all we undertake? Help us in this our Miſery, in making us more ſollicitous for our Everlaſting Happineſs; and let our Charity ſo abound more and more in all Knowledge, that in whatever we determine, we may above all things have our principal regard to Thee, and ſo ever be in a way of approving what is beſt.

Twenty-ſecond Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 22. V. 15. ends V. 21.

GIVE *to God, the things that are God's.* They are the Words of Chriſt in anſwer to the Phariſees, who deſigning to ſurprize him, by rendering him odious, either to the Prince, or to the People, are ſilenc'd in the Diſappointment of their Malice, and ſent away with this Fundamental Principle, by which they are reproach'd of their Wickedneſs; and in particular of the Method, at this time undertaken, for effecting what they propos'd. For if what belongs to God is to be render'd to him, what Judgment muſt they make of themſelves, who being Men of Parts and Learning, employ'd not theſe Gifts in the Service of God the Giver, by ſeeking Truth, and giving it Authority amongſt the Ignorant, but by contriving ways to oppoſe it, being induſtrious by falſe Conſtructions to render it leſs diſcernable, and here ſummoning all their Craft, to under-

undermine him, who came to teach it for the Salvation of Men?

Obſerve but their Addreſs to Chriſt; *Maſter*, ſay they, *we know thou art True, and teacheſt the way of God in Truth; thou haſt no regard to any one, nor conſider'ſt the Perſon of Men.* Nothing could be more Artificially laid for gaining their End, than theſe pretended Applauſes, which are ever moſt effectual for giving a more than uſual Confidence, and drawing from Perſons thus rais'd up in their own Opinion, Raſh or Indiſcreet Truths; and tho' the Infinite Wiſdom, they attack'd, was not thus to be brought into a Snare, yet the Principle he advanc'd might have made them ſenſible of their Injuſtice, in thus proſtituting their beſt Abilities to the Service of their Paſſion; which being the Effects of God's Goodneſs to them, ought to have been render'd again to him, in the Fruits of Piety, Charity and Juſtice.

In this way then were the Phariſees condemn'd, for not rendring to God, the things that are God's; and I wiſh they had the encloſure of this Guilt; but there are Grounds to ſuſpect it of a larger Extent, ſince to abuſe the Accompliſhments of Nature, and Bleſſings of Induſtry, by promoting an Intereſt, contrary

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to God, who is the Author of them, is ſo common amongſt profeſs'd Chriſtians, that they ſeem not at all concern'd in this Principle of Juſtice, of giving to God what belongs to him.

As for the very Fact of the Phariſees, it has been tranſmitted down to our days, by the like Practice of evil Chriſtians, who in all Ages have endeavour'd not only to eclipſe the Truth, but, by all the Contrivances of Art and Study, have labour'd to make it odious, and prevent its being diſcover'd by ſuch, whoſe Sincerity has put them upon ſeeking it. And what Plea have they had to juſtifie their Proceedings, but ſuch as carry'd on the Phariſees; their not ſeeing the Truth? But what put the Blind on their Eyes, but only permitting their Judgments to be corrupted by Paſſion, Intereſt and Ambition, and turning all that Induſtry, in finding ways to obſcure it, which ſhould have been employ'd in ſeeking it? Learning is a great Help, when it has Charity and Sincerity for its Guide; but if theſe are laid by, it only ſerves to make more Skilful Artiſts againſt Truth, and to undertake the Management of this great Injuſtice, in robbing God of what belongs to him.

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This ſame Injuſtice is practis'd in a more offenſive way, by thoſe, whoſe Education, and Natural Abilities, give them many Advantages over their Neighbours; and the general Subject, in which they exerciſe them in Publick, is either in ridiculing all Religion, or in advancing Arguments of Reaſon ſo far, as to expoſe all thoſe Myſteries, which are not the Conſequence of ſuch Principles. And where Impiety is ſomething more Modeſt, tho' ſuch Perſons ſpare the Fundamentals, yet how often do they exerciſe their Wits, in Raileries, againſt all thoſe, whoſe Exemplar Piety is a Reproach to their Scandalous Liberties, and in their jeering Attacks againſt the Stricter Profeſſors of a Goſpel Life? And of thoſe, who are not bold enough for this, are not there ſtill many, who abuſe the Words of Life, in making the Holy Scripture the Subject of their Jeſts, and give their Prophane Turns to this, when 'tis to ſet forth their own Wit, or entertain their Company. Now how far is this from giving to God what is his; when thoſe Gifts, with which he has bleſs'd all theſe, are no ways return'd to him, but made the Unhappy Occaſions of more plauſibly offending him?

Many others follow after theſe, tho' at ſome diſtance, who ſhew their Wit in expo-

expoſing their Neighbour's Actions, their Overſights and Indiſcretions; in painting out their own Worldly Paſſions in ſuch charming Colours, as to gain Admirers, and invite to Imitation; in applauding their Neighbour's Weakneſſes, and by hurtful Flatteries, encouraging ſuch Methods of Raſhneſs, Prodigality, Vanity and Folly, which in their Conſcience they diſapprove, and Charity obliges them to condemn; in ſtudied or affected ways of magnifying themſelves, and drawing all Subjects to their own Commendation. Infinite other Methods there are of this kind, by which Chriſtians abuſe the beſt Gifts of God; and inſtead of referring them to him, by making them ſerviceable to his Glory, to the Cauſe of Virtue, to their own or Neighbour's Spiritual Good, turn them all againſt him, in ſetting up an Intereſt contrary to what they profeſs, in being Followers of the Goſpel, and to all they have undertaken at the Font, when they were liſted amongſt the Adopted Children of God.

This hitherto touches only thoſe, who have not the Buſineſs of the World upon them; but if we turn towards them, who are under theſe Engagements, the ſame Charge, I fear, will be generally found ſtanding in force againſt them. For if

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we obſerve Men of Buſineſs, who have any Advantage above their Neighbours, either in Health, Strength, Capacity or Parts, what is the Uſe they make of theſe Gifts? I wiſh I could ſay with Truth, that by the help of theſe, they are better Advocates of Juſtice and Truth, are more exemplar in Virtue; are more zealous in reforming Publick Injuſtice and Scandals; are more Induſtrious in promoting what is for the Good of Church or State; but this is rather Wiſh than Fact; for beſides ſome few, who are diſtinguiſh'd by theſe particular Characters, 'tis but too evident, the greater number turn theſe Bleſſings quite another way; that is, bend all their Natural Abilities, either to raiſe themſelves higher in this World; to gain Riches and Places of Command; to contrive ways for impoſing on, and over-reaching their Neighbour; to be more Artificial Deceivers, more Ingenious Cheats; to exempt themſelves from Publick Service; to oppreſs the Poor with more Security, to make Advantage of others Misfortunes; and laſt of all, to be provided with ſufficient Means for living an Idle, Vain and Extravagant Life.

This is the general Method of Worldly Men; this the Employment of whatever Talents

Talents God has entruſted in their Hands; ſo that inſtead of employing them in the Service of God and Eternity, they have confin'd their Trade wholly to this World: And this ſome do ſo remarkably, as even to be ſtupidly Ignorant, as to all things belonging to God, and their Souls, whilſt, in Buſineſs of their private Intereſt, they have Cunning enough to manage againſt the Wiſeſt, without any Danger of being worſted: And others again are remarkable in another way, whilſt they not only ſeek this World, but even make uſe of that Sincerity and Candor of Temper, which God has given them, for gaining Credit to their Knavery; which others ſtill carry farther, in Counterfeiting Piety and Conſcience, that, under this Cover, they may deceive without Suſpicion.

In theſe ſeveral ways, Chriſtians join with the Phariſees in robbing God of his due, and not rendring to God the things that are God's. And beſides theſe, if other Chriſtians, who may preſume themſelves here not concern'd, would look into their Accounts, and ſee, what is the uſe of all they have receiv'd, of Time, Health, Eſtate, of Natural Abilities, and Acquir'd Accompliſhments, with all the Opportunities of doing good, which God puts into their Hands, I cannot but think, they

they will diſcover ſo much Waſte and Injuſtice in the abuſe of ſuch Bleſſings, that when they ſhall be call'd to an Account, and all is to be Stated by this Principle, of rendring to God the things that are God's, they will have reaſon to ſuſpect the Deciſion of their Eternal Lot. O God, I confeſs I have reaſon to fear this, when I look back upon my paſt Years; and therefore will not think of juſtifying my ſelf, but only of ſeeking my defence in thy Mercy: Pardon me therefore, I beſeech thee, all my paſt Injuſtices, and forgive me all my Iniquities; and now, from this time, give me Grace to conſider all thy Gifts; not how I may make an Advantage of them, as to this World, but the Purpoſes, for which thou haſt given them, and the Uſe thou expecteſt from me. This Grace, O God, is the greateſt Comfort I deſire here; and 'tis this only can give me Comfort at my laſt Hour, when thou ſhalt Summon me to render the Account of all that I have receiv'd.

Twenty-third Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE,

Philip. C. 3. V. 17. ends C. 4. V. 3.

BE *Followers of me.* The Advice is ſhort, but ſuch as ſpeaks at length the Excellencies of this great Apoſtle, whoſe Life was ſuch an exact Copy of the Goſpel, that requiring the *Philippians* to follow him, was a full Exhortation to them of following the Goſpel. To follow him, was to love Jeſus above all things, to know nothing but Jeſus and him Crucified; to eſteem all things, beſides Jeſus, as nothing; to deſire to forſake all things, and ſuffer all things for the love of Jeſus; to deſire to be with Jeſus, to ſigh and long to be united to him: To be willing to undertake all Hardſhips, to expoſe himſelf to Perſecution, Torments and Death for his Neighbour's good, to rejoyce in Tribulation, to be Crucified and Dead to the World, to embrace its Troubles, and renounce its Pleaſures. In fine, to be Followers of S. *Paul*, was to be Followers

of Jeſus and his true Diſciples. Good Advice to the *Philippians* in a few words; and happy they if they were ſollicitous to follow it. But is it not an Exhortation to, or rather a Command, to all Paſtors, to be ſo exact in all the Diſcipline of their Lives, that without danger to their Flock, they may every one ſay to thoſe under their Charge; *Be Followers of me?* As many as ſucceed St. *Paul* in his Function, ought ſo to inherit his Virtues, as to give the ſame Inſtruction, without Confuſion to themſelves, or Danger to their People. But except they Live with him, they cannot Preach with him.

To ſay Prayers to the Flock every Paſtor undertakes, becauſe here an external Decency and Gravity is generally ſufficient to recommend them to the People; and if they are interiorly indiſpos'd for this Duty, 'tis only known to God, without offence to the Hearers; therefore this part of the Function all readily perform. Some go farther, and undertake to Preach and Inſtruct others to Salvation, and think they have diſcharg'd this part very well, if they have deliver'd ſound Doctrine, with Zeal to the People: But how very few are they, who with a juſt Aſſurance can Preach this Sermon of the Apoſtle; *Eſtote mei imitatores: Be Followers of me.*

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Without which, all other Eloquence, however florid, muſt needs be barren; ſince no words can have that weight with the Flock, which are not accompanied with good Example; neither can God be expected to give a Bleſſing to ſuch Inſtruction, which is only the Eloquence of the Tongue, and not of the Heart.

But whatever the Paſtor be, whether Eloquent or Silent, he is ſtill a Preacher; his Life ſpeaks aloud to all that know his Converſation; *Imitatores mei eſtote: Be followers of me.* Whatever his practice be, 'tis as remarkable as a Voice from a Pulpit, and is an encouraging Leſſon to the Flock, of Virtue, if Good, and of Liberty, if that be his practice. He who lives with St. *Paul*, daily Preaches with St. *Paul* the Doctrine of the Croſs, the Love of Chriſt Crucified, and renouncing the World: And he who lives to himſelf, and the World, daily Preaches up Self-love and the World; and both one Day ſhall accordingly find the juſt Recompence of their fruitful Example, in the number of Souls that either live or periſh by theſe their powerful Inſtructions. A happy Day 'twill be to thoſe, whoſe Lives have been a propagation of the Goſpel; but how dreadful to ſuch, who being Enemies of the Croſs of Chriſt, have encourag'd Ambition,

bition, Covetouſneſs, Luxury, Exceſs; who have invited to the Broad Way, by a Life of Idleneſs and Eaſe, by gratifying themſelves in all the Liberties of Senſe and Self-love, to the evacuating all thoſe Maxims of Labour, Watching and Self-denial, recommended in the Goſpel, as neceſſary for the ſupport of Virtue in this our State of Corruption? Theſe will then find in numbers of loſt Souls, the powerful Preaching of their Lives, and that all their Liberties have ſpread to Generations.

But this Exhortation of St. *Paul*, concerns not only Paſtors, but Parents too; theſe are ordain'd by Almighty God, to give due Education to their Children, to bring them up in the Fear of God, and provide them all Inſtruction neceſſary for a Chriſtian Life; and beſides this, to give them ſuch good Example, that by the Parents Virtues and Diſcipline, the Children may inſenſibly be led into the Way of God's Commandments, and be able to ſay with *David*, *Hæreditate acquiſivi teſtimonia tua Domine: Thy Laws, O Lord, have come to us by Inheritance.* And this will certainly be ſo, if they be the Chriſtians they ought to be: For the Life of Parents to Children, is like that of the Paſtor to his Flock; it is a daily Sermon, which

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ſays to them, *Be Followers of me:* For Children have it engrafted in their Nature, to approve and follow what they ſee in their Parents. Hence we may pronounce thoſe happy, whoſe Lives are ſo well order'd, as to be a conſtant Exhortation to their Children, to Piety, and the Love of God, to Moderation, Meekneſs, Patience, Charity, Compaſſion, *&c.* to a deteſtation of all Injuſtice, Luxury, and other Modiſh Vices of the Age. Such as theſe anſwer the Truſt they have undertaken, and are faithful to their Charge: And nothing but this can ſecure them againſt Confuſion and Deſpair, in whatever Miſcarriages afterwards befall their Children: For tho' theſe muſt ever be very ſevere Afflictions to Parents; yet the Conſideration, of nothing having been occaſion'd thro' their Faults and Example, is the only thing that can poſſibly temper and render them any ways tolerable; and is therefore a Point, in which Parents, as often as they prepare for the Sacraments, ought ſtrictly to examine themſelves; ſo to lay the Foundation of a Future Peace, and ſecure them hereafter againſt all Fears, which otherwiſe may be a Rack on their Souls.

For certainly it muſt be ſo to thoſe, who unmindful of this Duty, and carried

away with the violence of their own Paſſions, give their Children daily Inſtructions and Encouragements to Vice, in letting them be Witneſſes of their Idleneſs, Luxury and Intemperance; of their Curſing and Swearing; of their Prophane, Paſſionate, and Uncharitable Diſcourſes, and of variety of other Diſorders and Irregularities, by which they train them up by degrees to Wickedneſs, make their Houſes ſo many Schools of the Devil, and ſettle their Children in the Inheritance of their Vices, long before they come to their Eſtates. Now what a part is this for Parents to act, who, as they have brought their Children forth to this World, are under the ſtricteſt Obligation, of helping them forwards, as far as in them lies, towards the poſſeſſion of a better; and, inſtead of this, to lead them into Evil, to encourage them in Wickedneſs, to teach them to provoke God betimes, and thus become the unhappy Inſtruments of their Damnation? ----- What ſhall I ſay? I think 'tis the moſt unnatural Cruelty in the World, a Barbarity ſo inhumane, that to Parents, who have but Souls to think, there cannot poſſibly be any thing more tormenting. To ſee how fond and tender they are of their Children, how very ſenſible of every thing

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that hurts them, and yet at the ſame time to be inſenſibly preparing them for Eternal Flames, is a Chriſtian Abſurdity, ſuch as muſt neceſſarily, upon reflection, put them on the Rack, and ſcarce admits of any Conſideration to moderate the Pain: The Children of their Bowels, and by their own Hands led to the brink of Hell. And what a deſpairing Guilt muſt it bring on their own Heads, if they do not reclaim them! For if ſo ſevere a Sentence be pronounc'd againſt thoſe, whoever they be, that ſcandalize any of theſe little Ones, *Mat.* 18. 6. how muſt theſe Woes be multiply'd on Parents, when 'tis they that give the Scandal? Let thoſe underſtand the weight of them that can.

I heartily wiſh Parents and Paſtors would ſeriouſly conſider this Point, and be ſo far prevail'd on by the greatneſs of their Obligation, and theſe diſmal Conſequences of their Tranſgreſſions, as to be faithful to their Truſt, to edifie by their good Example all under their Care; and not allow, in themſelves or others, any thing that may give Scandal to their little Ones, and draw on them the Guilt of Parricides, or Murtherers of Souls, and even thoſe Souls, which they undertake to ſave. But this muſt be the Effect of thy Grace, O God: Help therefore, I be-

ſeech thee, all thoſe infinite numbers, who have this great Charge upon them: Make them ſenſible of their Duty; preſerve them from all Scandals; eſtabliſh them in the practice of Virtue and good Diſcipline, that they may be as Lights ſhining to thoſe that follow; that their Lives may be an Encouragement to all good; and the Virtues of their Children and Flock, may thus come to be the Everlaſting Encreaſe of their Crowns.

Twenty-third Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 9. V. 18. ends V. 26.

A *Certain Ruler came and ador'd him, ſaying, Lord, my Daughter is now dead.* The Subject of the preſent Goſpel are two Miracles, one wrought by Chriſt upon a Woman, in the Cure of a dangerous Diſtemper; the other upon the Daughter of this Chief of the Synagogue, who here made his Petition to him. In both theſe is figur'd the unhappy State of Sinners, one of them having been labouring under a tedious

tedious Diſtemper of many Years, and the other being quite Dead; and tho' the one being reſtor'd to Health, and the other to Life by Chriſt, be Demonſtration enough, that there is no kind of Sin, which may not find Remedy in him; yet while we ſee the Woman, here mention'd, had been many Years ſeeking Cure, in following Phyſicians, without finding it; and new Life of the other is ſo far deſpair'd of, that the Propoſal is receiv'd with Mockery and Scorn, and no leſs than a Miracle, from the Immediate Preſence, and Omnipotent Power of Chriſt, is neceſſary for their help. The Comfort here given to Sinners has a very great Allay, in the Motives given for their concluding, That if their Eſtate be of wilful Sin, under the continuance of Years, ſuch as renders them quite Dead to God, it has ſo much of Deſpair in it, that upon following the beſt Spiritual Phyſicians, they may ſeek for Health a long time, and not find it at laſt; except Chriſt, by his extraordinary and miraculous Power, ſhall come in to their Aſſiſtance. And if they look on themſelves, have not they more reaſon to Deſpair, than hope for this Priviledge? For what Motives can they have to think, that God ſhall ſignalize his Favours to them by Miracles, who have liv'd ſo long

in Rebellion againſt him; and had no regard either to his Judgments or Mercies?

This makes the Caſe of Habitual Sinners to be almoſt deſperate; but who has brought them into this unhappy State? It is the Fruit of their own Wickedneſs, and they muſt bear the Burthen of it. But however they are not to deſpair, ſince Miracles may help them; if there be no Grounds in themſelves for ſuch undeſerved Help, let them build this Hope on the Goodneſs and Mercies of God, which are infinite, and have here given Inſtances of their Power. Why were theſe Miracles wrought, but to prove the Miſſion of Chriſt, and to encourage diſtreſs'd Souls to ſeek for Comfort and Cure in him? But then, ought not thoſe, who deſire this Relief, put themſelves in the I i poſitions of theſe, who here met with ſuch Succeſs? For if they do not labour in this, their Hope will be rather a Temptation, than Virtue, and haſten Death, inſtead of preparing for a Cure.

Hence I can have but little Confidence in their Method, who, ſenſible of the great Diſorder of their Souls, and of the dangerous Infirmities, under which they labour, upon a preſent deſire of Amendment, make a haſty Preparation for the

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Acknowledgment of their Sins, and then running to the Table of our Lord, conclude their Peace to be made, and that now they are in the State of Health and Innocence. For tho' theſe Sacred Ordinances are, by a Divine Virtue, powerful Reſtoratives of Health, yet, like the beſt Medicines, they cannot be expected to do Good, but where the Patients, by ſuitable Preparations, fit themſelves for receiving the Benefit of them. If therefore theſe Sinners, touch'd with the ſenſe of their Iniquities, and with the deſire of a Better State, would, by Penitential Exerciſes, firſt truly humble themſelves in their own Eyes, as to judge themſelves unworthy of appearing in the preſence of God; if inſtead of thruſting in amongſt thoſe Gueſts, whoſe better Life fits them for the Holy Banquet, they would judge an Excluſion from that Priviledge more becoming their Condition, and be contented to be in their Father's Houſe, not as Children, but as Servants: If they would thus, not only humble themſelves, with this diſtreſs'd Woman, but likewiſe raiſe their Hearts, by a lively Faith and Confidence in God; if they would lay open their Neceſſities with the Holy Importunity of this Ruler, approach to Chriſt with his Adoration and

and Hope; from such Preparations might be expected all the Help they desire and want; for 'tis only on these Conditions, Sinners are encourag'd to hope for Mercy, and by these ways the Gospel teaches them to seek it. But if they step over them, contenting themselves with that, which, without these, is only the Form of Repentance, they may easily have the Form of Absolution without the Effect; and return from the Tribunal of Mercy, with all the Guilt they brought with them, besides the addition of Sacriledge and Prophanation to their former Sins.

And because few of those Sinners, here concern'd, make due Reflection upon this Preparation, and fewer take Pains in accomplishing it; hence, I cannot but fear, That while great Numbers croud, with the Multitude, about Christ, they are not many, who, like the Infirm Woman, touch him, so as to find the Effect of his Presence. This must be the Effect of a Particular Grace; and, O God, how few are they, who, by the Exercises of true Humility and Penance, put themselves in the Disposition of obtaining this Favour from thy Hands!

Wherefore it must certainly be concluded the great Concern of all Christians, to prevent their coming into this unhappy

happy State, which has ſo much Danger in it, and ſo many Difficulties in being deliver'd from it. What therefore are they to do, but obſerve the ſame Method as to their Spiritual, which Diſcretion teaches them as to their Corporal Health? Thoſe, who are ſollicitous to eſcape Habitual Diſtempers, obſerve Order in all the Concerns of Life, both as to Eating, Drinking, Sleeping, Buſineſſes and Divertiſements, avoid all Extremities of Heats and Colds, and upon any Symptoms of a Diſorder appearing, endeavour, by ſeaſonable Care, to prevent its coming to a Head. In the ſame manner are Chriſtians to proceed: They are to be ſtrict in obſerving Order and Diſcipline in all they do, as to the Affairs both of Body and Soul; they are to admit nothing that is Immoderate; and upon diſcovering an eagerneſs in any one Paſſion, which is the Symptom of an approaching Diſeaſe, are forthwith to ſet a Watch upon it, and, by timely Endeavours, ſtrive to bring it into due Subjection.

By this way, tho' it will not cut off all Failings, and Sins of Surprize or Paſſion, yet there will no Opportunity be given for any of them to become immoderate, or grow into a Cuſtom; and ſo the moſt dangerous Diſtempers will be prevented.

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But here is the Misfortune; too many are poſſeſs'd with a Principle, That little Diſorders can do but little Harm; and hence they ſay, What need of being exact to Hours of Prayer, of Eating or Sleeping? What Harm can there be in neglecting ſuch Order? What if we love Company, Gaming, take ſome liberties in Drinking, Converſation, *&c.* 'tis in ſuch a moderate way, that nothing, but ſcrupulous Nicety can cenſure it? I would ſay the ſame with them, did I not ſee theſe little Diſorders bring on inſenſibly the worſt of Diſtempers; and that, by ſuch inconſiderable things neglected, there is made, by degrees, a Familiarity with the blackeſt Crimes. It may ſeem little to neglect Order in the Diſcipline of Life; but let them ſhew me, where this is the practice of any time, without being follow'd with Notorious Irregularities. It may ſeem inconſiderable, not to be exact in the time of Riſing in the Morning, in Praying, and Reading, or Speaking the rigorous Truth; but let them tell me, where ſuch Liberties are uſually taken, but where they are follow'd with greater? And whether it be not from ſuch Seeds, that the Devil makes his Harveſt in the Fruit of all Iniquity.

If this then be the uſual Progreſs of Sin, as moſt certainly it is, what can be more adviſable for Chriſtians, than to be watchful in theſe Points, which are eſteem'd but inconſiderable, as the moſt effectual Means for avoiding the dangerous State of an Habitual Indiſpoſition of Soul, from which ſo very few recover? Grant, O God, to all that profeſs thy Name, this Wiſdom, by which they may be deliver'd from the Snares of a Powerful and Subtle Enemy, who by cover'd Ways, and undiſcern'd Contrivances, obtains the poſſeſſion of infinite Souls. Make me always watchful againſt him, and never to walk on confident of being ſecure, where ſo many, like my ſelf, have begun, and gone on blindly into the depth of Vice. And as for all thoſe, who are now in this unhappy ſtate, give them a Senſe of their Miſery, and Grace, whereby they may be reſcued from it, that not contenting themſelves with the Ceremonies of a Superficial Repentance, they may lay the Ax to the Root, and, as thou commandeſt, ſeek thy Mercy, by bringing forth worthy Fruits of Penance.

Twenty-fourth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE,

Coloſ. C. 1. V. 6. ends V. 14.

WE *pray without ceaſing— that you may walk worthy of God, pleaſing him in all things*, and *bringing forth fruit in every good Work*. The Obligation we are under of pleaſing God, and bringing forth Fruit in every good Work, may be eaſily apprehended by the great Sollicitude of St. *Paul*, in praying without ceaſing, that his Flock might ſtrictly follow this Rule, and be ever found thus doing. The ground of this our Common Duty is evident; Firſt, on the part of God; becauſe he being our Severaign Lord, our Creator, Redeemer, Preſerver, Father, the Beginning and End of all Things, Juſtice obliges us, who are his Creatures, the Price of his Blood, his Servants, his Children, and wholly depending on his Will, ever to walk worthy of him, and pleaſe him in all things, in every good Work. Secondly, from the Conſi-

Conſideration of our ſelves, and the Circumſtances of our State: For ſince we believe a Life Eternal to come, and that the obtaining Poſſeſſion of it, depends on the good Management of this preſent Life, in diſcharging all thoſe Duties Almighty God exacts from us, 'tis a Juſtice we owe our ſelves, to be careful in pleaſing God, and bringing forth Fruit in every good Work, that ſo we may not be excluded that Everlaſting Inheritance, the Divine Mercy has prepar'd for us. Upon theſe Heads, we are oblig'd to be bringing forth Fruit; and hence appears the neceſſity of a Chriſtian Life being a fruitful Life; that is, of the Chriſtian being ſo employ'd, that what he does, may be pleaſing to God, and conſequently beneficial in order to Eternal Happineſs; becauſe this is to be the Fruit of his living here; and this is the trueſt meaſure of a Chriſtian Life: And therefore St. *Bernard* ſays, *Whatever a Man does, that is not for this end of pleaſing God, it is being idle, and doing nothing; 'tis living without fruit, and loſing that time, which is given us.*

Hence, firſt, Whatever time is ſpent in doing what is contrary to the Commands of God or his Church, in Detraction, evil Converſation, Exceſſes, Revenge, Injuſtice, *&c.* is doing worſe than nothing,

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Hence, firſt, Whatever time is ſpent in doing what is contrary to the Commands of God or his Church, in Detraction, evil Converſation, Exceſſes, Revenge, Injuſtice, *&c.* is doing worſe than nothing,

is time quite loſt. Secondly, An idle Life, whether exterior or interior, as of thoſe who apply their Thoughts to nothing, or at leaſt unprofitably, in vain Projects, chimerical Deſigns, are at reſt with their Arms acroſs, is doing nothing, and time loſt. Thirdly, All indifferent actions, as Eating, Drinking, Sleeping, Viſiting, Recreating, *&c.* if done, only to pleaſe our ſelves, or on Humane Conſiderations, without any referring them to God, is doing nothing, and time loſt. Fourthly, Doing what is otherwiſe good, if it be not what God requires of us; as for a Magiſtrate to be Viſiting the Sick, when he ſhould be Adminiſtring Juſtice to the Oppreſs'd; a Paſtor to be Studying, when the Neceſſities of his Flock call for Help; a Shop-keeper or Servant to be all Day in the Church, when the Obligation to his Family or Maſter, requires his being at Home, with all of this kind, is doing nothing, and time loſt. Laſtly, Doing the beſt of Actions without regard to God and our Salvation, is doing nothing, and time loſt: Becauſe all this is either contrary to the Will of God, or elſe not done, as he requires it; and conſequently, 'tis not walking worthy of God, 'tis not pleaſing to him; and therefore, not poſſible to bring forth Fruit. And what

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a Misfortune muſt it be to Chriſtians, thus to loſe this time, who have only this time granted them for working out their Salvation, which being once wholly loſt, muſt with Everlaſting Deſpair be lamented, but can never be redeem'd!

And now ſince this is the Condition of our being here, that we muſt either bring forth the Fruit requir'd, or elſe never be Happy, I know nothing ſo much to be dreaded by Chriſtians, and with greater Care to be avoided, than an idle and unactive Life, which tho' not Criminal in Terms, is yet ſuch, as in it ſelf, or its Conſequences at leaſt, renders Salvation difficult, if not wholly inconſiſtent with it; for if bringing forth Fruit be neceſſary, 'tis not only the Land that is overgrown with Thorns, is accurs'd; but even that which lies unprofitable and barren, without Thorns or Fruit: Therefore was a Curſe pronounc'd againſt the Tree in the Goſpel found without Fruit; and the Servant, who had not miſ-ſpent his Talent, but only laid it by without any improvement, was rejected, not for a wicked, but an unprofitable Servant. The Chriſtian's Duty is not only to avoid Evil, but to do Good; 'tis to bring forth Fruit; if he does not this, he needs not ask what Commandment he breaks? For tho' he be no Thief,

Thief, nor Murtherer, nor Adulterer, yet he's an *Unprofitable Servant*, and their Portion is much the ſame.

Muſt it not therefore be a great Unhappineſs in thoſe, who ought ever to be well employ'd, not to know how to employ themſelves at all? Truly I cannot but pity that great number of both Sexes, who have Inclinations to do well, but are every Day at a loſs, and know not what to do: Their time, which ought to be ſo Precious, ſticks on their Hands; and all their Conſideration is, how they are to ſpend it idly? 'Tis their great Misfortune, and ſo, I fear, they'll find it; but 'tis a much greater in their Parents, who have given them ſuch wretched and unchriſtian Education, as to make them in love with nothing, that ought to be their fit Employment of vacant Hours: There are great variety of theſe; whether in Studying, Reading, Working, which are honourable enough, and ſuitable to all degrees; and tho' not neceſſary for a Livelihood, becauſe they are otherwiſe bleſs'd with plenty, yet neceſſary ſtill to make them live like Chriſtians; and ſuch, to which the Parents Care ought inſenſibly to incline them in their tender Years. But theſe, too often indiſcreetly fond, ſtudy more to court and pleaſe their Children,

dren, than to breed them up like Chriſtians: The Childrens Inclinations govern their Parents more than their own Reaſon, Religion or Duty; hence their chief Care is how to ſatisfie them; by this means to ſecure to themſelves their love: For this reaſon, they encourage them in all that is Modiſh, Vain and Curious, and by this yielding Method, daily ſtrengthen in them thoſe Natural Infirmities and Corruptions, which they bring into the World; and for fear of making them uneaſie, dare not reſtrain their Inclinations, nor apply them to ſuch things, which afterwards may be an Advantage in the well-ſpending of their time. Thus principled they grow up; and tho' their own reaſon then weakly informs them, they ought to be well-employ'd; yet finding nothing they can then turn to with any delight, they are put to conſider how to divert themſelves: And hence each Sex unhappily takes its Courſe wholly to Diverſion and Idleneſs; and thus their Life is ſpent, in unprofitable Viſits, in the Theatre, the Park, the Muſick-Houſe, in Entertainments, in Taverns, Gaming, Balls, *&c.* And how many beginning in theſe Schools, go on ſo far, till they have an Averſion to every thing that's orderly and good, and by degrees arrive to profeſs'd Impiety, Intemperance

perance and Vice; waſting their Eſtates and Health, and abandoning Religion, and all the Concern of a future State? Truly, of ſo many Souls that Periſh, of ſo many Families that are brought to Ruin, of ſo many that take Extravagant and Unchriſtian Ways, I cannot but apprehend, the greater number owe their Misfortunes to this unhappy Root of Idleneſs, and the miſchievous Neglect of Parents, in not teaching their Children to love ſome better Employment of their time, and expoſing them to that deſperate Temptation all their Lives, of not knowing what to do: Deſperate I ſay, for tho' Perſeverance in the continued Labours of a virtuous Life, be to all difficult, and has variety of Dangers to overcome; yet to ſuch as are at a loſs in knowing not how to employ their time, theſe Difficulties and Dangers are multiplied to ſo great an exceſs, that it muſt be no leſs than a Miracle to preſerve ſuch in any tolerable degree of Chriſtianity, and ſecure them from the depth of Vice; and this is the Bleſſing fond Parents too often leave their Children, flattering them in petty things, and making them for ever Miſerable; ſo that in the end it will appear, they had better have bred them to the Labours of the Plow, than brought them up to this State

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of Idleneſs; whilſt their Salvation depending on their walking worthy of God, pleaſing him in all things, and bringing forth Fruit in every good Work, they are by this means taught to walk only worthy of a wicked World, and unworthy of God, to pleaſe their own corrupt Paſſions, and diſpleaſe him, and bring forth no other Fruit but of Vice and Damnation. And yet, O God how common is this practice in the World! 'Tis thy powerful Grace alone can remedy it, in making Parents wiſer, and Children more careful of their time, and laborious in every Duty. Remedy it therefore, I beſeech Thee.

Twenty-fourth Sunday *after* Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 24. V. 15. ends V. 35.

WHen *you ſhall ſee the Abomination of Deſolation, ſtanding in the Holy Place, --then let thoſe, who are in* Judea, *flee to the Mountains.* The Advice given by Chriſt in this Goſpel, is principally in regard either

ther of the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* by *Titus*, or of the laſt Perſecution of the Church by Antichriſt. The Miſeries of Beſieg'd *Jeruſalem* make no great impreſſion now, becauſe they are paſt. And the Deſolation of the Church by Antichriſt gives not any Alarm, becauſe it ſeems ſo far off: But why are we not mov'd with the preſent Signs of God's Anger, which ſeems provok'd againſt us? The Marks given to the Faithful by Chriſt, as pointing out the time, when the Divine Wrath ſhould diſcharge it ſelf upon *Jeruſalem*, was when they ſhould ſee *Abomination ſtanding in the Holy Place*. The Prophanation of Holy Things, is both a Mark and Effect of God's Anger: And if the Believers were then directed to retire out of *Jeruſalem*, and ſeek ſhelter in the Mountains, when they ſhould obſerve this Mark, that ſo they might not be made a part of the Common Ruin; have not Chriſtians ſufficient reaſon to conſider, whether they do not obſerve at preſent Signs of the Divine Wrath, enough to oblige them to fear God's Judgments, and to think of providing for their own Security?

Let them but take a paſſing review of the Prophanation of all Holy Things; of the very Altar, by the Unexemplar and Scan-

Scandalous Lives of Eccleſiaſticks; of the Temple, by the great Irreverence of the Faithful; of Holy Orders, by being made a ſtep to Dignities and Riches; of a Religious Life, by the many Abuſes and Liberties, with which it is corrupted; of the Sacraments, by thoſe, who unworthily approach to them; of the Word of God, by ſuch as pervert it for the ſupport of their Errors; of God's moſt Holy Name, by thoſe, who unworthily prophane it; of Religion and Piety, by ſuch as carry on the moſt unwarrantable Undertakings under this Cover, and by the ſame, draw in the Credulous to their Party; of God's Will, by Sinners, who contemn it; of his Law, by the ſame, who trample it under their Feet; of his Juſtice, by thoſe, who deſpiſe it; of his Mercy, by ſuch, as in Confidence of this, continue on raſhly in their Wickedneſs.

Such a Conſideration attended with all its Circumſtances, beſides infinite other Branches, may be enough to conclude, That there is truly now Abomination of Deſolation ſtanding in the Holy Place; and that upon this Sign of God's Diſpleaſure, there is reaſon to ſeek Security againſt his Judgments, nay, (without looking farther at preſent) againſt theſe Judgments; his ſevereſt Scourges being not

greater Judgments, than this ſo general Corruption; it being part of that Chaſtiſement, with which St. *Paul* ſays, *Rom.* 1. God puniſh'd thoſe Unbelievers, who knowing God, did not glorifie him as God, and therefore were abandon'd by him, and deliver'd up to a Reprobate Senſe, even to their own Infamous Paſſions, and to the Deſires of their own Hearts. This rigorous Puniſhment now upon ſuch infinite numbers, who knowing God, do not glorifie him as God, but prophane him in all that is Holy, and therefore are deliver'd up to the Corruption of their own Reprobate Senſe, is that which ought to awaken all Obſervers, and oblige them to have recourſe to Chriſt, who is the Mountain, and in whom alone is their Security.

And principally to turn away the Anger of God, and Weight of his Judgments, from the Chriſtian World, by humbling themſelves before him, and endeavouring to move him to Mercy. And yet not ſo, as juſtifying and diſtinguiſhing themſelves from others, as having no part in their Crimes, by which God's Juſtice has been provok'd: For who knows, but they have contributed to it by their Tepidity and Neglects, by their Pride, Ingratitude, and the Abuſe of ſuch Graces,

Graces, as they have receiv'd? Who knows, but the Opinion of their own Virtue is rais'd from the greater Sins of others, in which they do not concurr, and that they may connive at many Sins in themſelves, becauſe they ſeem leſs, than what others commit? And may not they hence inſenſibly loſe the Horror of great Offences, accuſtom themſelves to them, not think of bewailing, and much leſs of oppoſing them? Thus then many, who reflect not upon it, may have a great part in the Provocations given to God, and in drawing down his Judgments.

And therefore the better part, even of the Beſt, is to join themſelves with Sinners, humbling themſelves with them, and not confiding in any thing of their own, to build their hopes on the greatneſs of God's Mercy alone; as we ſee practis'd by *Daniel*, who having, without queſtion, the leaſt ſhare in thoſe Sins, which had provok'd God to tranſport the *Jews* into *Babylon*, yet ſeparates not himſelf from others, but joining with them, puts himſelf into the number of thoſe, who had provok'd God to Wrath. *We have ſinn'd*, ſays he, *we have committed iniquity, we have departed from thy Commandments, we deſerve Confuſion for our Sins.* —*'Tis not in Confidence of our own Juſtice, we offer our*

Prayers to thee, but of the multitude of thy Mercies. And ſince this Humility of the Prophet was ſo acceptable to God, as to obtain from him a Revelation of the Meſſias, and a Promiſe of Liberty for his People, I think Chriſtians cannot have better Encouragement and Direction, as to the general Method they are to take in their Addreſſes to God, for removing his Judgments from his People.

But as to themſelves Chriſt gives this Advice; *He that is on the Houſe-top, let him not go down to take any thing; and he that is in the Field, let him not return to take his Coat.* In which words, he gives Direction to thoſe, who have gain'd any degree of Virtue, not to be prevail'd on by the Conſideration of Worldly Intereſt or Affection, to go back again into the common Ways of the World; but rather to abandon all that belongs to Earth, for their greater Security againſt the Wrath of God. They, who are Sollicitous to ſave all, hazard all; 'tis therefore more adviſable for them, to let that periſh, which is periſhable, and to confine their Sollicitude to the ſaving that, which is Eternal. Whence all thoſe muſt conclude themſelves under a Fatal Miſtake, who think their Salvation muſt coſt them nothing, and for putting themſelves under Covert againſt

againſt the Common Corruptions of the World, will not renounce any part of their Convenience or Intereſt for theſe, who are ſo earneſt in linking their Temporal Affairs to Salvation, are eaſily ſurpriz'd with Ruin, as the *Jews* were, who unwilling to quit their Conveniencies by leaving the City, loſt themſelves by endeavouring to ſave what belong'd to them.

Hence it is, Chriſt pronounces Woes againſt thoſe, who in ſuch Circumſtances, are with Child, or give Suck; that is, againſt ſuch, as are big with Worldly Deſires and Projects, and ſuch, as make their Body the ſole Object of their Care, flattering it, as a Nurſe does her Infant, in all the ways, that can be pleaſing and eaſie to it; becauſe thoſe are ſo bent on this World, and the promiſing Satisfactions of it, that they cannot be perſwaded, Retreat is neceſſary, and therefore go on under all the Deluſions of Self-love and the World, till the Terror of God's Judgments and Death meets them; when an Eternal Separation muſt be their Puniſhment, for admitting of no Separation before, for turning away the Anger of God from them, and making proviſion for Eternity.

There being this difficulty, all have reaſon to pray, as here adviſ'd, *That their flight be not in Winter, or on the Sabbath*; that is, That God will not permit his Judgments, or extraordinary Trials, to fall upon them, at a time, when their Souls are Weak, Barren, Tepid and Dry, when thro' theſe Indiſpoſitions, they ſhall not be prepar'd to flee to the Mountains, and ſeek ſhelter in God: But that he would be ſo Merciful, as to proportion his Grace to the Temptations, that ſhall befall them: For an ordinary degree of Virtue being not ſufficient to ſtand under extraordinary Trials, if he does not thus Mercifully aſſiſt them, they muſt be ſurpriz'd by Ruin. What will an ordinary Humility do, under extraordinary Humiliations, or a moderate degree of Self-denial, when the greateſt Intereſts are to be renounc'd? And ſince none know the Trials, they have yet to go thro', whether in Life, or as to the manner of Dying, have not all reaſon to make this a part of their daily Prayer, that God would prepare them for all Tribulations, and mercifully ſtand by them in the Day of Diſtreſs?

O God, we are ſenſible of thy Judgments, paſt Ages inſtruct us, preſent Chaſtiſements awaken us, and we have the

Terror

Terror of what is yet to come. We confeſs, our Sins bear a great part in the Provocation given to thy Juſtice, and at the ſame time acknowledge thy Mercy, in ſhewing us how to eſcape thy Wrath. Perfect this Mercy, we beſeech thee, in us, that at preſent, by a true Humility, we may move thee to moderate thy Scourges, and by a ſincere Converſion to thee, may receive thoſe Graces, which may carry us thro' all Trials, that are yet to come, and direct us ever to thee, by whom alone we can ſubſiſt.

Firſt Sunday *of* Advent.

EPISTLE,

Rom. C. 13. V. 11. ends V. 14.

"*TIs now time for us to ariſe from ſleep—— let us therefore caſt away the Works of Darkneſs, and put on the Armour of Light.* With this day we begin *Advent*, a time appointed by the Church to prepare for the great Solemnity of *Chriſtmas*, now approaching, when with Adoration and Gratitude we are to Celebrate that ineffable Myſtery, of the Second Perſon of the Bleſſed Trinity made Man, being Born of

the Virgin *Mary* for our Redemption: To prepare, I ſay, for this great Solemnity, theſe Four Weeks of *Advent* are appointed us by the Church; and for this end, it is She, on this Day, calls out to us, in the words of St. *Paul*, *'Tis now time to ariſe from ſleep; Caſt away the Works of Darkneſs:* Now when the Son of God is approaching, now when we are to prepare to meet him, no more ſleep of Tepidity and Sloth; no more ſleep of Gluttony, Luxury and Intemperance; no more ſleep of Contention, Animoſities and Envy. No, we are to Sanctifie our ſelves, as the *Jews* were commanded to do, when God had promiſed to come down in ſight of the People; and ſo endeavour to receive him, with interior Diſpoſitions ſuitable to the greatneſs of the Myſtery: Without this, we can expect very little Effect of this Mercy, but have reaſon to fear, thro' our unworthineſs, we ſhall be wholly excluded, with that unhappy Man, who came to the Marriage-Feaſt without the Wedding Garment.

We are then this Day to riſe from the ſleep of Sloth and Tepidity: For when the Son of God, compaſſionating our Miſery, deſcends upon Earth, cloath'd with our Humanity, and ſubjects himſelf not only to the common Hardſhips of this Mortal State,

State, but chuſes even that bitter Portion of it, in Poverty, Contempt, Perſecution, Reproaches, to which Nature is ſo much averſe, and concludes all in the unſpeakable Torments of a cruel and ignominious Death; when the Son of God, I ſay, for the love of us and our Salvation, comes thus into the midſt of us, is it not time for us to riſe from the ſleep of Sloth? Or can we imagine, we have either Reaſon or Faith, if this infinite Charity of our Redeemer be not enough to awaken us? Captives, who have paſs'd many Years tir'd under the weight of Oppreſſion and Chains, and now loſt all hopes of Liberty, upon the News of an unexpected Deliverer approaching, who at his own Charges, and taking upon him their Slavery, deſigns their Ranſom, muſt certainly receive new Life, and raiſing up their dull Spirits, in tranſports of Joy, expreſs their reſpect and gratitude to their Redeemer: Here all Dejection would be Inſenſibility, and heavy Sleepineſs Ingratitude. 'Tis our very Caſe; and therefore for us to lie ſtill now, when we have the Encouragement of ſuch a laborious Charity before us; to go on ſlothful, and ſleepy, and with little or no Concern of ſhaking off our Chains, when our Redeemer comes, who, not on free coſt,

but with the Price of his Blood purchaſes our Ranſom, ſeems not a Sin of ſleepineſs, but of affected ſtupidity; and is an Ingratitude, I fear, unpardonable. Tis therefore now time for us to riſe from ſleep.

But have we not ſtill greater reaſon to caſt off the Works of Darkneſs, in renouncing all Gluttony, Luxury and Intemperance? For what part can they expect in the Mercies of a Redeemer, that comes to die for the overcoming of Sin, who in their Lives go on maintaining the Intereſt of Sin? This is to eſpouſe a Cauſe contrary to Chriſt, and ſtand in oppoſition to him; and therefore it can be no leſs than mocking God, and miſerably impoſing on our own Souls, to pretend to his Mercies, while we have our Hands thus lifted up againſt him. 'Tis like the abſurdity of thoſe, who ſeem to Conſecrate a Temple to the Worſhip of the Living God, and at the ſame time keep their Idols there, and fall down before them. Every Vice is an Idol; Luxury, Intemperance, all ſinful love of Creatures are Idols: And thoſe who ſatisfie their own diſorder'd Paſſions, in theſe or other like Engagements, fall down before Idols and Worſhip them, to the Contempt of God and his Law: But amongſt theſe, the Sins

Sins of Contention, Uncharitableneſs and Envy, are with a particular Care to be renounc'd; for at a time, when the Son of God comes to lay down his Life to make a general Peace, and reconcile the World with God, not excluding his Enemies, the greateſt Sinners, but even for theſe deſiring to become a Sacrifice of Expiation, there can be no juſt Diſpenſation for Animoſities, Ill-will and Hatred amongſt Chriſtians; but all theſe are to be cheerfully quitted, in imitation of the Infinite Charity of our Redeemer: For what grounds can they have for Mercy, who ſhew none to others? Or how can they hope for Pardon of God, who forgive not their Brother?

The moſt certain Means then of receiving Advantage from the Mercy of this Time, muſt be in following the Apoſtle's Advice, in renouncing the Evils we have Contracted, and ſincerely labouring to put on our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: *Induimini Dominum Jeſum.* We muſt meet him in his own Livery: Whatever we ſee practis'd by him, we muſt faithfully endeavour to copy out in our Souls. As therefore we behold in him a total ſeparation from all manner of Sin, from all that is Corrupt and Senſual; As we behold him in the perfect Profeſſion of Charity, Humility,

mility, Patience, Purity, and every way performing his Father's Will; ſo, to receive the Bleſſings of his Nativity and Redemption, we muſt be cloath'd like him, diveſting our ſelves of the Corruption of the Old Man, and put on the New, which is not according to Nature, but according to God. This is to be the Subject of our Prayers and laborious Endeavours of this time of *Advent*: 'Tis the Church's Charity to her Children, now to call upon them, and give them timely notice, that when God's Hands are full of Bleſſings to be pour'd forth upon his Servants, they may be found prepar'd, and not loſe the Benefit of this Holy Time, thro' their Iniquity or Neglect. For this End, She requires them to mend their dull and ſlothful pace, to ſpur forward with a more active and lively Zeal, in imitation of that overflowing Charity, with which Chriſt comes to us; She commands them now to take ſome pains to put on Chriſt, and not to be ſatisfied, till in their Souls they can diſcover ſome real reſemblance of him. And how groſly muſt they deceive themſelves, who think there's any thing of this, in a Life of Sloth and Sin? Should a Painter, deſir'd to repreſent in lively Colours *Peace* and *Plenty*; and pretending to have finiſh'd the Piece, bring

forth

forth a horrid Scene, frightful, with all the ſeveral Calamities of War and Famine: Should he again, undertaking to deſcribe *Temperance* and *Patience*, paint out all the Extravagancies of Drunkenneſs, Paſſion and Fury: Should he, when ask'd to draw the Beauty of a Noon-day Light in its ſtrongeſt Rays, repreſent the Silence and Horrour of Night: Would not he be eſteem'd Ridiculous and Mad, and juſtly be condemn'd to loſe his Pay? Now, tho' this be an Abſurdity ſcarce to be found in Colours, yet 'tis what repreſents thoſe Chriſtians to the Life, who undertake, as it were, to Copy Chriſt, and ſcarce have one ſtroke, which bears reſemblance with him. His Humility and Patience are to be imitated by them, and theirs is a Life of Pride and Paſſion: His Charity and Labours are to be follow'd; and is this done by a Life of Idleneſs, Sloth and Self-love? His Holineſs, and forſaking the World, are to be ador'd and lov'd; and is this expreſs'd in the repeated Engagements of Vice and Folly? I can't tell how far Chriſtians think of this; but certainly they muſt imagine God to be an Idol, blind and ſenſleſs, if they perſuade themſelves, this will ever paſs for *Putting on Chriſt*, or be taken for a reſemblance of him. 'Tis this then

ought

ought to be our Care at preſent, to draw a better Copy: Not to go on at eaſe in all our wonted Liberties of Sloth and Sin: But firſt, with the Carver's Hand, cut off all thoſe Deformities, by repeated Strokes, which make us Monſters, more like Brutes than Men; work off all Paſſions and ill habits of Vice and Self-love; and then with the Pencil, lay on thoſe Goſpel-colours of all Chriſtian Virtues, which may effectually render us like our Lord. See then, Chriſtian, at this time, how much thou haſt to cut off; ſet to the Work, and tho' it requires force and violence, be not diſcourag'd; 'tis thus the rough and deformed Wood is brought by degrees to ſhape, and becomes a lively Expreſſion of a Glorious Martyr, or thy dying Lord. Let this be now thy Work; advance ſomething every Day; thus by degrees thou wilt come to put on Chriſt, and be prepar'd for all thy Redeemer's Bleſſings.

First Sunday *of* Advent.

GOSPEL,
Luk. C. 21. V. 25. ends V. 33.

MEN *withering away for Fear and Expectation of those things, which shall come upon the whole World.* This Day begins the holy time of Advent; a time wherein the Church calls upon all the Faithful, to prepare for the due Celebration of the great Festival of *Christmas*, now approaching. It is then we renew the Memory of Christ's Birth, and are to acknowledge the Infinite Mercy of our Redemption. On that Mercy our Salvation depends; and that we may be truly sensible, how much it is our Interest to make an Advantage of it, the Church lays before us this day the Terrors of the last and general Judgment, that being now season'd with the Fear of God's Justice, we may be more sollicitous, not only to adore, but in earnest to lay hold of his Mercy; since 'tis only the Mercy of God can save us from the Severity of his Justice. This is the method proposed by the wise Man: *The Fear of our Lord*, (says he) *is the beginning of Wisdom.* The way to be Wise to Eternity, is to be

begin with Fear. Teach us therefore, O God, this Day to fear thee; *Confige timore tuo carnes meus*; let my Fleſh be ſeiz'd, and tremble under the Apprehenſion of thy Judgments, that by the happy Effects of this ſeaſonable Fear, I may prevent my being one of that unhappy number, who living now fearleſs, will then begin to fear, when they ſhall ſee thy provok'd Juſtice falling upon them without hopes of Mercy.

'Tis now then we are, in thought, to conſider our ſelves in the very Circumſtances of the approaching Judgment, and ſee, if, from our imperfect Apprehenſion, we can imagine, what will then be the Terror of poor Souls, when they ſhall find all Nature, not as now, offering it ſelf to the Uſe and Satisfaction of Man, but joining with God, to take Revenge of Sin, when they ſhall ſee the Sun loſe its light, the Moon grow dark, and the Stars to fall from Heaven, when they ſhall ſee themſelves in the Confuſion of Lightning, Thunder and Earthquakes, not now according to the uſual Courſe of Nature, but render'd as Terrible, as the Power and Anger of God can make them; when Whirlwinds and Storms of Fire ſhall purſue them in all their ſhelters, when the noiſe of the ſwelling Sea ſhall threaten a univerſal Flood;

Flood; when the Earth ſhall be ſhaken from its Foundation, when all Nature ſhall be in a Convulſion, and no Place or Creature left to give relief, but where-ever they flee from Terrors, it ſhall be only to meet new Terrors to confound them. If we can but remember what are the Effects of ordinary Thunder, Lightning, or Earthquakes, in the Frights they cauſe, we may gueſs ſomething, what will be the Confuſion of Man in this general Diſorder, when the Frame of the whole World ſhall be disjointed, and quite falling in pieces; we may eaſily imagine, how Man ſhall wither away for fear.

This Fear will be encreas'd with the expectation of what is yet to come; for tho' theſe are great Evils, yet every Sinner will be ſenſible, of theſe being only a Preamble to greater. The Criminal brought to the Bar, and expecting the coming of the Judge, who is to pronounce his Doom, cannot but be ſtruck with Terror, when he hears the Noiſe and Feet of thoſe, who are making way before him; becauſe then he knows, his Cauſe and Crimes are to be laid open, and Sentence is to be pronounc'd againſt him. This is but a ſhadow of that unhappy State, in which all Sinners will be at this time: For when they ſee the World in this Diſorder, they will all have a Senſe, that the pre-

preſent Evils are only the Forerunners of their Judge, who is coming to take an Account of their whole Lives, of all their ſinful Extravagancies, and will judge them according to their Works. Who can apprehend here what their Confuſion will then be! They are conſcious of their own unworthineſs; all their Sins ſtand before them; they now have a full and perfect View of all their Omiſſions and Neglects, of the Time they have loſt, of the Mercies ſlighted, of the Bleſſings they have abus'd: They know nothing can be hid from their Judge; they know what their Fate muſt be; they know now, what Eternity is; what it is, to be for Ever Baniſh'd from their God. All theſe Thoughts preſs upon them with ſo heavy a weight, that they have ſcarce a Senſe of the diſorder'd World; theſe Fears then are ſwallow'd up with greater: Nay, they rather deſire an encreaſe of the preſent Evils, wiſhing the Mountains would fall upon them, and hide them from the Anger of their God, or cruſh them into their Primitive Nothing.

But this cannot be, they muſt be preſented before their Judge; and if they wither'd away before with Fear, under the Apprehenſion only of this ſad Appearance, what muſt their Condition be now, when they are placed in preſence of their

their Judge; when they ſhall ſee their God, a God indeed in Majeſty and Power, arm'd with Terror againſt them, but without any Glimpſe of Mercy for them, excepting that only, which has been formerly neglected by them: When they ſhall ſee in the Sacred Wounds of their Redeemer, how truly Sollicitous God has been for their Salvation, who gave his only Son a Sacrifice for their Sins, and in the ſame Wounds ſhall now fully comprehend their own Folly, Blindneſs and Ingratitude, who have either paſs'd by with Contempt, or with Obſtinacy reſiſted all theſe Expedients of Mercy. This will be ſuch Reproach of all their former Sloth and Iniquity, that the Goodneſs and Mercy of God, which will be the Comfort and Life of the Juſt, ſhall become the Torment of Sinners; ſo that they ſhall deſire to retire from it, and, even without a Sentence, be willing to hide themſelves in Hell, rather than bear the tormenting Reproaches of their own Sins, heightned beyond all meaſure from the Sight of their God, and his Mercies. Sad and deſperate Condition of Souls, who have brought themſelves to that Unhappineſs, that Infinite Mercy and Goodneſs, and God himſelf, are become to them a Torment leſs tolerable than Hell it ſelf! But this is the Effect of their own Iniquity,

Iniquity, and God's Juſtice: They had liv'd divided from God, they would not hear his Voice, nor regard his Precepts; they choſe rather to follow their own Corruption, and the grateful Sollicitations of the Devil; thus they liv'd, and thus dying, their Souls become unchangeable, their Diſorders and Paſſions are harden'd in them, and having ſubjected themſelves to the Devil, they have him to command them for Ever.

This will be the Miſerable Portion of thoſe unhappy Ones, who have liv'd here unmindful of their Duty, and their God, aggravated with ſo many frightful Circumſtances of Baniſhment from Heaven, of unſpeakable Torments, of Eternity, of an unchangeable State, and of endleſs Racks and Deſpair, that there is no Surprize in the wonderful Effects it has had on thoſe, who have made it the Subject of their Serious Thoughts: No wonder, that the Heart of S. *Jerom*, in his Sollicitude, was ſeiz'd with the dread of this Day: No wonder, that S. *Auguſtin* made it his Prayer, to be tormented, burnt, cut in pieces here, that he might be ſpar'd hereafter: No wonder that ſo many Pious Chriſtians have retir'd from the Dangers of the World, hid themſelves in Caves and Deſarts, renounc'd all that is pleaſing

pleaſing on Earth, have choſe Priſons, the Sword, and Wild Beaſts, that they might eſcape the Terrors of This Day.

The greater wonder is, that we who are yet behind, and ſay, we believe this Judgment to come, that we muſt all be preſented before the Tribunal of Chriſt, be judg'd according to our Works, and that all the Workers of Iniquity, all who live Carleſs of Salvation, ſhall be brought at length to this Confuſion, and be excluded for Ever from the Sight of God, with this Sentence; Go you Curſed into Eternal Fire, there to be Tormented with the Devil and his Angels, for Ever, for Ever, as long as God ſhall be God, without hopes of relief or change: The greater wonder, I ſay, is, that we, who believe this, ſhould live almoſt as unconcern'd as if we believ'd it not; that we ſhould prepare ſo little againſt that Day, but be as eaſy and forward in ſinning, as if our danger of periſhing everlaſtingly were more from Virtue than from Sin. Conſider but the general Wickedneſs of the Chriſtian World, how almoſt all forſake the Narrow Way of the Goſpel, and become the Diſciples and Admirers of a Corrupt World; how Intereſt and Pleaſure are more powerful with them, than the Commands of God; how Fraud, Over-reaching,

ing, Prophaneneſs, Gluttony Intemperance, Luxury, *&c.* are their profeſs'd Practices, and without reproach; and then tell me, if it be not ſurprizing, to find this their general Method, who believe they are to render an Account of what they do, and that Sin will find its Puniſhment in Everlaſting Flames.

That we may give no occaſion to this wonder, we are to follow the Spirit of the Church, and imprint in our Minds a lively Senſe of the General Judgment, that the Remembrance of this may be a perpetual Check to our Corrupt Inclinations, and a Reſtraint to our Paſſions; that this Fear may withdraw us from Sin, and ſpur us on, now in time to ſeek for Mercy.

For this end, it would be a good practice every Morning in this Holy Time, at our firſt awaking, to ſuggeſt this Truth; Soul, remember thou art to be call'd to Judgment, there to give an Account of all thy Thoughts, Words and Works; there to receive Sentence, either of an Everlaſting Baniſhment from Heaven, or of being with God for Ever. And this will make the better Impreſſion in the Morning, if the ſame Thoughts cloſe thy Eyes at Night.

Secondly,

Secondly, It will be the beſt Wiſdom to prepare againſt the Terrors of the Laſt Day, by calling our ſelves now to an Account; by judging our ſelves, that we may not be judg'd, and condemning our ſelves, that we may not be condemn'd. Nothing can Cancel the Old Account, but a ſincere Repentance, a true Converſion of the Heart, accompanied with an humble Acknowledgment of our Offences. And they, who deſire, that this Undertaking be no Mockery of themſelves, and of God, muſt ſee what the Evils are, to which they are Subject, and now in earneſt reſolve, not to tollerate any thing in them, which at the Laſt Day, will be the Object of God's Anger, or be Fuel for Everlaſting Flames. If there be difficulty in this Work, let the Thoughts of Eternal Fire give life to the Undertaking, and puſh on the Soul amidſt the Charms of Sloth, and all other pleaſing Deluſions. If it be hard to reſiſt the Corrupt Inclinations of Nature, let the Queſtion be put, Whether it be harder to deny our ſelves for the Moment of this Life, or be tormented for Ever. And if the Thought of thoſe Torments begins to loſe its Sting, endeavour to ſharpen it every Day, by letting the Fire, thou now ſeeſt ſo often, be a continual remembrance of the Fire of Hell.

Theſe

These may be some helps; but to do all to the purpose, 'tis thou, O Lord, must inspire us with a lively Sense of our Danger, and teach us to fear thy Judgments. Teach me now this Lesson, I beseech thee, O Jesus, and let the Memory of that Last Day so possess my Soul, that I may have a continual dread upon me of all that is Sinful; teach me now to lay hold of the Mercy thou offer'st, for thus only can be prevented the Terrors of thy Justice. Now I desire to renounce all Sin, and make War against the Corruption of Nature, and the World: This shall be my Business, as long as I live, that so, when thou call'st, I may be prepar'd to appear before thee, and have place in that happy number, who shall be invited with that Joyful Sentence; Come you blessed of my Father and possess the Kingdom, which has been prepared for you.

Second Sunday *of* Advent.

EPISTLE,

Rom. C. 15. V. 4. ends V. 13.

WHatever things have been writ, have been writ for our Instruction, that by Patience,

Patience, and the Comfort of the Scriptures, we may have hope. The Apoſtle here declares the Holy Scriptures to have been writ for our Inſtruction; but in what? He ſays, *For our Inſtruction in Patience*, and to give us that *Comfort* we here ſtand in need of, that our *Hope* fail not. This is the End for which the Scriptures were committed to writing. Wherefore, ſuch as peruſe them daily, and are not inſtructed in *Patience* and this *Comfort*, do not learn, nor receive that Benefit, which God has deſign'd for them; they may repeat Texts and Chapters, and yet be very ignorant in the Scriptures; whilſt others, who appear leſs knowing, may in Effect be better inſtructed in them, by having their Souls more ſtrengthen'd in Patience and Comfort, the true Effects of that Divine Nouriſhment.

Hence it muſt certainly be a great miſtake, to think the Word of God was committed to Writing, that ſo every unskilful Head might have the opportunity of interpreting it at pleaſure, might ſet up for Prophets and Apoſtles, erect Churches or Religions, and take thence a Commiſſion to fly in the Face of that Authority, which Chriſt has eſtabliſh'd, and the Scriptures and Creed recommend, for the Teaching his Truth. No, this can be no-

thing but the uſurpation of a Power, God has no where given them; and muſt be cenſur'd as the raſhneſs of preſuming Men, who are vain enough to judge themſelves ſufficiently qualified to be their Expoſitors and Teachers; tho' at the ſame time, by being *Unlearned* and *Unſtable*, as St. *Peter* declares, they run the hazard of interpreting and *wreſting them to their own Perdition*, 2 *Ep.* 3. 16. and but too evidently expoſe themſelves to the Severity of that Sentence, pronounc'd in the *Revelations* againſt thoſe, who *add* or *take away* from what is there writ; ſince every falſe Intepretation of the Sacred Text involves this Crime, by preſumptuouſly adding, or ſacrilegiouſly taking away from the Truth there deliver'd. And there's no queſtion, this only Reaſon has been the Motive to the Church, of uſing ſome reſtriction as to the reading the Scriptures: She is very ſenſible of the common weakneſs of Mankind, of the far greater number being *Unlearned* and *Unſtable*; and that while they are ſo, they have this common Miſery attending them, as not to be ſenſible of it themſelves, but that generally a great Preſumption is the Companion of great Ignorance: Hence like a tender Mother, who is oblig'd to take Care of her Children, committed to her Charge

Charge by Chriſt himſelf, ſhe feeds them with the Divine Nouriſhment of the Holy Scriptures, by faithfully inſtructing them in all Chriſtian Duties there expreſs'd, without expoſing them to the Weakneſs and Uncertainty of their own private Interpretations, or leaving them to pervert that Sacred Food into Poyſon. Were it not for this Abuſe of Holy Writ, and how great it is, we experience in the almoſt infinite Sects of this Nation, there would be no reſtraint in the reading it. And therefore for ſuch, who have any Principles of ſteddineſs to ballance the over-fondneſs of their own Thoughts, there's no difficulty in having this allow'd them; nay, they may be encourag'd to it. And while this liberty is granted to the Judicious and Learned, and the reſtraint is only in regard of the *Unlearned* and *Unſtable*, this cannot in Juſtice or Reaſon be interpreted as a deſign to keep People in Ignorance, or prevent the diſcovery of ſuppoſed Errors; ſince the Learned would more likely do this, than thoſe that are otherwiſe; but muſt be underſtood as a Charity to theſe latter, to prevent the Miſchiefs they might otherwiſe do themſelves, in wreſting the Scriptures to their own Deſtruction. For ſince the *Unlearned* and *Unſtable* are too

apt to do this, is it not a kindneſs, to give them a better and ſafer Guide than themſelves, eſpecially ſuch, as Chriſt himſelf has appointed for their help, and ſolemnly engag'd his Word, it ſhall lead them into all Truth? Such a Guide to thoſe, who are in danger of miſtaking their way, is certainly the Effect of God's Infinite Mercy and Sollicitude for their Eternal Good; and to neglect this Mercy, muſt be the Preſumption of Men, chuſing to hazard the loſing their way under their own uncertain Conduct, than be ſafely directed by the help of a ſecure Hand, which God has appointed to lead them. And this Preſumption is very ſurprizing; for ſince the Word of God it ſelf, has given this Caution againſt *Private Interpretation* of Scripture, and expreſly declar'd, that many, thro' their Inconſtancy and Inability, pervert it to their own Eternal Ruin: And on the other ſide, has ſo fully recommended his *Holy Catholick Church* to us, not only by inſerting it in the Creed, and obliging all to make Profeſſion of Believing it, but likewiſe, by declaring it to be the *Ground and Pillar of Truth*, promiſing to be with it to the end of the World, That the Gates of Hell ſhould never prevail againſt it, That whoever heard it, ſhould hear him, and laying an Obligation

tion on all of hearing it, under the Penalty of being otherwiſe reputed as Heathens: Since the Word of God, I ſay, thus declares the Uncertainty and Danger of *Private Interpreters*, and recommends the *Church* for a ſure Guide; is it not a ſurprizing thing, that in an Affair of an Eternal Concern, People ſhould leave what is certain, for an uncertainty; and chuſe rather to follow what may probably lead them into Danger, than what, on Chriſt's Word, will be Security againſt it? Such Principles as theſe, we generally diſlike in all that regards our Temporal Intereſt; and to be led by them in the more weighty Concern of our Salvation, looks like the Effect of an unaccountable Blindneſs.

Thoſe therefore, who deſire to be ſecure, read not the Scripture to be their own Interpreters, in determining Myſteries of Faith; but as to theſe, hear that Guide God has given them, and from which he has promis'd they ſhall hear the Truth: And on this his Promiſe they depend, which cannot fail; and not on the uncertainty of their own Apprehenſion, which is ſubject to ſo many Deluſions from Education, Prejudice, Prepoſſeſſion, Pride, Self-love and Intereſt; which are not eaſily diſcern'd, and from which neither

ther Wit, Learning, or Humane Abilities are ſecure: But they read the Scripture, for the end it was writ; for their Inſtruction in *Patience*, and to receive the *Comfort* it gives: They read it, to learn to ſuffer with Patience all Afflictions, the Provocations and diſagreeable Tempers of Men; the Mortality of their Body, the Weakneſs and Darkneſs to which they are ſubject, the trouble of their own Sins, the Humiliation of which they are to ſuffer, without being diſcourag'd or dejected; the Method of God's Conduct over us, which is not always conform to our Inclinations, nor anſwerable to the Impatience of our deſires: God has his time, and 'tis our Duty to wait: Patience likewiſe in perſevering in Good, and bearing all the Diſcouragements it here meets with. The Scripture teaches us to practiſe Patience in all theſe particulars, and furniſhes us with powerful Comforts to make us hold out, notwithſtanding all our Weakneſs: And, no doubt, but whoever reads the Scripture, not with the Preſumption of Interpreting and Defining, but with the Humility of one, who deſires to be inſtructed in Patience, and the Practice of other Chriſtian Virtues, will find the Fruit of his Endeavours in a plentiful Harveſt;

Harveſt; and, tho' never ſo unlearned, needs not fear being reprov'd, but will rather be encourag'd to drink daily at this Fountain of Life.

Second Sunday *of* Advent.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 11. V. 2. ends V. 10.

JOhn *in Chains.* S. *John Baptiſt* was ſent to prepare the Way of Chriſt before him: And we being now in a time, wherein we are to prepare for the great Solemnity, we Yearly Celebrate of Chriſt coming into the World, to undertake the Work of our Redemption, the Church propoſes to us in this Goſpel the Example of S. *John*, and of S. *John* in Priſon, that from him we may learn the beſt Preparation, and moſt ſuitable to this time. The End of Chriſt's coming into this World, was to ſuffer; the Baptiſt is ſent to prepare his way, and he is preſented to us this Day in Suffering: And is not this to teach us, that as many as deſire to prepare to meet their Lord, and receive the Fruit of his Coming, muſt learn to ſuffer; that ſo they may be fitted to Communicate with the Sufferings of Chriſt, and, in the

way, he has taught, have a part in his Redemption? Let us therefore this Day learn, how we are to ſuffer.

Thoſe, who believe no Life to come, have no other meaſure of things, but with Reſpect to this Life, and ſo they make every thing the Object of their Deſires or Averſion, as it is agreeable or diſagreeable to their preſent State. They approve Pleaſure, Liberty, and Humane Greatneſs, and under theſe Enjoyments think themſelves happy, becauſe theſe raiſe them in the Opinion of this World: They have an Abhorrence of all kind of Suffering; becauſe this depriving them of what the World eſteems, and leſſening them in the Eyes of Men, they hence eſteem themſelves miſerable. This is the Judgment of Senſe; and ſuch Men are call'd by the Apoſtle Senſual, or Carnal Men; becauſe they judge of every thing by the Senſes.

But as for thoſe, who truly deſire to be Diſciples of Chriſt, they proceed upon very different Principles: They have a Faith of a Life to come, and believe it their great Buſineſs of this Life, to provide for Happineſs in a Future State. Hence they meaſure every thing here, not by any Agreeableneſs to Senſe, or by the common Opinion of Men, but by Faith

Faith only, even that Faith, which is taught them by Chriſt; and by this Rule, as far as every thing of this Life contributes to the gaining that which is Eternal, or is contrary, or a Hindrance to it; ſo they judge it to be Good, Evil, or Dangerous.

Upon this Principle, the Judgment they make of all kind of Suffering is different from the World. They conſider the Sufferings of this Life, as a proper Means to diſengage their Hearts from all Immoderate Love of Creatures, and of the World: And this Love being that which puts them moſt in danger of a Miſcarriage, as to Everlaſting Happineſs, they ſee ſuch an Advantage in Suffering, as even to find Comfort under it, whilſt the World judges them miſerable. Again, they believe all Suffering whatever to be the Appointment of God, and that it is his Will, they ſhould drink of the Bitter Cup, that is put into their Hands, and carry whatever part of the Croſs is laid upon their Shoulders: They believe again, the moſt effectual Means for obtaining future Happineſs, is a ready Submiſſion to the Will of God; and therefore, under all the Uneaſineſs of Suffering, they have this Comfort of Spirit to allay the Bitterneſs of Senſe, that they are in a way to the Poſſeſſion of God, their

moſt deſirable Good; for the obtaining which, all Loſs muſt be eſteem'd Gain.

They conſider again, there is no Poſſibility of their Lot being with the Bleſſed, but by the Help of God's Grace; and then being taught, that God has regard to thoſe who are in Affliction, undertakes their Protection, and hears their Prayer: They look on their Trouble, if ſubmitted to with Patience, as a Means of obtaining that Grace, which muſt be their help to Life Eternal: In this Conſideration they ſee an Advantage in their Suffering, and know how to rejoice in this Hope, whilſt the World is pitying their Misfortune.

They conſider again their danger of being excluded Heaven, can come from nothing, but their Sins; and being aſſur'd, the Afflictions of this Life, ſuffer'd with an Humble Spirit, are the moſt effectual Means for obtaining Mercy and Pardon; that ſuffering with Chriſt, is the ſureſt way of partaking of the Effect of Chriſt's Sufferings, and of reigning with him, they find ſomething more valuable in Affliction, than in all Worldly Happineſs; and not judging it by Senſe, but by Faith, eſteem it according to the value of that Purchaſe, which is offer'd for it.

From theſe and ſuch other Principles of Faith, Reaſon receiving its Direction, the Faithful Chriſtian learns how to ſuf-

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fer, and positively judges it reasonable to suffer whatever God appoints for him; nay, that he should not act according to Christian Reason, if he did not submit to it with Patience and Comfort. And this is the Method of his Reasoning: Being happy in the Possession of God, is the the End of my very Being, 'tis the End for which I was Born into this World; and ought I not then to rejoice, when I am in the surest way of coming to this End? Can I be in earnest, in desiring Heaven, and not be satisfied, when I am in the way, that leads to it? There are many Difficulties and Dangers in this way, which hazard a Miscarriage; and it is not reasonable for me to be comforted, when I see the Difficulties diminish'd, and the Dangers lessen'd? If I see Eternal Evils threatens, and may be shelter'd against their Stroke, by submitting to some Temporal Inconvenience, which cannot possibly last long, would it not be reasonable to compound on these Terms? They are so reasonable Conclusions from the receiv'd Principles of Christianity, that there is no acting against them, without doing Violence to Reason or Faith.

Wherefore the good Christian, tho' his Senses be as Quick, and he feels as much as another, yet he looks beyond this; and where Faith informs him, that the

the Suffering of Senſe is available to an Eternal Good, he gives this Light to Reaſon, and ſo gives a Preference to things, that are ſerviceable to the great Concern, and eſteems not that a Misfortune, which opens a way to Bliſs.

Hence in time of Affliction, he is not anxiouſly Sollicitous to enquire into the Cauſes, why Providence ſhould thus order the Diſpoſition of Things; neither in favour of his own Tears, does he conclude God's Anger to be provok'd againſt him. His only ſettled Thought is, to make a right uſe of his Suffering; becauſe he is convinc'd, this will be to his Advantage, whatever the reaſon be, for which God is pleas'd thus to viſit him: For ſhould it be the Effect of God's Diſpleaſure, he knows, an humble Submiſſion to his Scourge, is that which will moſt effectually move him to Mercy, and make the beſt Atonement for whatever Provocation he has given.

Wherefore baniſhing from his Thoughts, in the beſt manner he can, all kind of Sollicitous and Diſquieting Amuſements, he conſiders his great Misfortune here, is, that he is ſeparated from God, and in Danger of being for ever ſeparated from him. No Earthly Troubles can have any Proportion with this; and if the bearing theſe may be a help, in uniting him to God, he thinks this a ſufficient Reaſon for his ſub-

ſubmitting and embracing them with a chearful Heart.

And if the Soul at any time ſeems to ſink under any Darkneſs or Oppreſſion, then he endeavours to comfort her with the Thoughts of that Eternal Weight of Glory, which is prepar'd for thoſe that overcome; he lays before her the Shortneſs of this Life, and bids her compare its Sufferings with the Reward, and with the endleſs Sufferings of the Life to come: He preſents to her S. *John* in Chains, *Peter* in Priſon, *Paul* in Perſecution, the Martyrs on the Rack, Confeſſors in Baniſhment, Ermits in the Deſart, and infinite Numbers of Pious Chriſtians, who, like *Job*, have ſuffer'd all the Difficulties of this Life, in the loſs of Goods, Health, Friends, Liberty and Life, and, with the Apoſtle, even rejoyc'd in their Tribulation, in Expectation of the Promiſes: Then he demands of her, Art thou better than theſe? If Heaven was worth all their Suffering, is it not worth thine? Be ſubject therefore to thy God, let him Command, do thou Obey, and let it be thy Comfort to do his Will, let it be thy Satisfaction, to be in the Way to Happineſs.

Thoſe Chriſtians, who govern by theſe Principles, have reaſon to hope well, as to their future State; becauſe, having almoſt every Day ſomething to ſuf-

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fer, they have every Day Opportunity of making ſome advance towards Bliſs. And how unhappy are thoſe, who learn not this Leſſon, which ought to be practis'd every Day, but, by their Impatience, even then loſe Ground, when they are call'd upon, to approach towards Heaven! Help us in this Point, O Jeſus; and ſince it is ſo ordain'd, that by many Tribulations we muſt enter into Happineſs, teach us to make a right uſe of whatever thou ſendeſt; teach us to ſuffer with Patience; thou haſt taught us, 'tis true, by thy Word, thou haſt taught us by thy Example; but remember, I beſeech thee, our great Weakneſs, and have Compaſſion: Pardon our paſt Failings, and ſo ſtrengthen us now by thy Grace, that by ſuffering for the future, with an Humble and Reſign'd Spirit, we may thus give Proof of our being, what we profeſs, thy Diſciples.

Third Sunday *of* Advent.

EPISTLE,

Philip. C. 4. V. 4. ends V. 7.

REjoice *always in our Lord; again I ſay, rejoice.* 'Tis hard to apprehend, how

how a Soul can love God, and not rejoice in him: For as we naturally rejoice in the Proſperity or Succeſs of a Father or Friend, whom we love; ſo whoever loves God, and conſiders his Glory, his Happineſs, his Holineſs, his Juſtice, muſt feel interior Comforts, and rejoice in God being what he is. This Joy is the Subject of many *Pſalms* and *Hymns*, which we find in Holy Scripture, and ſuch like ought to have a part in the daily Devotions of every Chriſtian. Again, whoever reflects on that frightful State, from which we have been deliver'd, and conſiders ſeriouſly the Miſery of a Soul ſubject to the Devil's Tyranny, dragg'd by him to Everlaſting Death, blinded with unreaſonable Paſſions, and impos'd on with a thouſand groſs and criminal Deluſions, will diſcover ſufficient reaſon to rejoice in the Giver of that powerful Grace, whereby they have been brought to the truth of Chriſtianity, and ſeparated, without any Merit of theirs, from ſuch great numbers, yet left in the darkneſs of Ignorance and Error, and in the ſhadow of death. Thirdly, whoever is ſenſible of the greatneſs of thoſe Gifts, which they have receiv'd, in being made Members of his Myſtical Body, the Adopted Children of God, Heirs of Heaven, and Co-heirs of Chriſt, and of the unſpeakable

ſpeakable Happineſs promis'd to ſuch poor Worms, muſt neceſſarily rejoice in this Hope, as in the ſettlement of an Everlaſting Inheritance, which is none of their right, but by the Mercy of the Giver, and not to be forfeited but by their fault. From this threefold Head of the Love of God, and the Conſideration of the Evils from which we have been deliver'd, of the great Bleſſings we enjoy, and infinitely greater promis'd, the Servants of God have found ſufficient Matter of Joy, ſuch as has rais'd them above the deceitful Satisfaction of the World, ſupported them in Troubles, comforted them in Perſecutions, and in the Terror of Death it ſelf: And ſome degree of it ought to enter into every good Chriſtian's Heart; it being very difficult to conceive how a Soul can be diſpos'd to rejoice in God for ever, who does not begin here. And this more particularly at this time, when the Mercies of our Redeemer's Birth are laid before us, who comes to be our Light, our Comforter, our Phyſician, and at the expence of his Blood, to remove all thoſe Evils of Sin, which can be the only Diſcouragements of a Chriſtian Soul. His coming to call Sinners, and find the loſt Sheep, ought to raiſe up all Hearts from Dejection and Deſpair; and his plentiful Re-

Redemption, oblige them to join in Spirit with the B. Virgin, and rejoice in God our Saviour.

The Conſideration of this Duty of rejoicing always in God, obliges us to cenſure, and be very apprehenſive of their State, whoſe Souls are ſo Worldly, and truly Indiſpos'd, as, thro' their own faults, to find no Comfort in the performance of any Chriſtian Duty, nor any Sweetneſs in the Thoughts of God and his infinite Mercies; and for this End are ever ſeeking abroad for Relief, and never eaſie, but amidſt dangerous, and even ſinful Diverſions, ſuch as the World is full of for the Entertainment of Worldly Souls: Theſe have their Treaſure, where their Hearts are, and this being not in God, it is not in him they rejoice: And what then muſt their Condition be at the Hour of Death, when their Souls going out of this World to appear before God, they are forſaking what they love, and not going to it? This muſt cauſe a trouble, and this trouble is but an ill preſage of rejoicing ever in God.

There's another ſort of Chriſtians, who rejoice not in God, whoſe Condition is more to be pitied, than condemned, their Diſorder being more their Misfortune than their Fault: And theſe are

ſuch,

ſuch, who ſincerely deſire to ſeek God, take pains in finding him, have their Thoughts on their Duty, and are ever conſulting on this Subject; but then, thro' the unhappineſs of a melancholy and over-fearful Temper, are perplex'd with Crowds of ſuch apprehenſive and diſquieting Thoughts, that tho' they truly ſerve God, yet they cannot poſſibly Rejoice, or find any Comfort in him. Their Imagination is very ſtrong and lively, and every Phancy that any ways thwarts their Duty, makes a very ſenſible impreſſion in them; then their exceſs of Sollicitude encreaſing the horror, they are truly frighted; and paſſing Sentence with their *Fears*, inſtead of framing a deliberate Judgment, they haſtily condemn themſelves: Thus tho' their Guilt be nothing but *imaginary*, and the Effect only of an immoderate fear, yet it brings as great a diſquiet with it, as if 'twere real; their Minds are oppreſs'd with grief, which caſts them almoſt to Deſpair; it is a perpetual Diſtraction at their Prayers, and Hindrance in all other more Sacred Duties; ſo that however they perform them all, yet 'tis without all ſenſe or feeling of Devotion; and thus they drag on under the uneaſie weight of an oppreſs'd, dark and comfortleſs Mind: This is their Miſery,

ſery, and what requires the prudent Management of a diſcreet Director, to help them in this their Spiritual Diſtreſs, and deliver them from the Deluſions of a ſubtle Enemy, who ſeeing no hopes of ſeperating them from God by Sin, thus hinders their approaching to him, fills them with fears, that ſo they may never have the liberty or quiet to improve in Love, and their more ſubſtantial Duties.

Their only Remedy then muſt be, under God's Hand, wholly to reſt in the direction of their Spiritual Director, to whom they muſt faithfully lay open their State; and ever ſtrive to admit no other Idea of themſelves, but what is according to the judgment he makes of them, without regarding the terrifying Suggeſtions of their own fears. If he thinks better of them, than they do, 'tis what, by degrees, they muſt bring themſelves to believe, and carefully put by all other thoughts, that are contrary to his, as what they truly are, Temptations and Deluſions: If they apprehend God to be angry with them, or that their Director does not underſtand their Caſe; away with theſe thoughts; they are Temptations, the natural Conſequence of their Diſeaſe; the confidence in their Guide ought to overrule them all. And tho' this may appear like

like arbitrary, yet 'tis nothing but what is reaſonable, juſt and neceſſary. For ſince their own Judgment is greatly diſcompos'd, their Reaſon clouded with variety of Fears and Paſſions, what can be more proper and ſafe for them, than to admit the guidance of another's hand, and ſubmit to his Judgment, which being not diſturb'd like theirs, is more capable of giving Direction, and preventing the Miſchiefs of their Blindneſs? This is a general Method ordain'd by God for all, ſince the moſt Judicious and Sedate are not allow'd to be the beſt Judges in their own Caſe, being expos'd to indiſcernable Partialities and Miſtakes; with how much more reaſon then ought it to be obſerved by theſe, whoſe Judgments are wholly corrupt, and they as truly blind, as violence of Paſſion can poſſibly make them: So blind, that they ſee nothing of their own State; make no true Conſtruction of themſelves; but without raſhneſs, may be judg'd groſly to miſtake in almoſt every Thought relating to their own Diſeaſe. And therefore are ever tormenting themſelves with anxious and diſquieting Fears, grieve to exceſs, and ſigh under Oppreſſion and Diſcouragement, and thus go on, as if 'twere reaſonable and juſt they ſhould do ſo; whereas 'tis a thing wholly unreaſonable and unjuſt,

juſt, and condemn'd by as many Spiritual Authors, as ſpeak of this Subject? However difficult therefore it may be to renounce their own thoughts, in ſubmiſſion to the Judgment of their Director, yet 'tis what they muſt ſtrive to do, if ever they intend to be cur'd of this Evil; and this not only as to the reſiſting all interior trouble, and entertaining a more favourable Opinion of themſelves, than their own inclination leads them to; but likewiſe of frequenting the Sacraments, as often as he ſhall adviſe, tho' at the ſame time they perceive no ſenſible Advantage by them, but may interiorly ſuffer very much in complying with this Duty: There being no other way for them to diſappoint the malicious Snares of their Enemy, who is willing to perſwade them, that all their Spiritual Exerciſes are to no purpoſe; ſo by degrees to bring them to a total neglect of them, and lay aſide every thing, that may be for their good.

And that they may perform this with ſome grounds of Comfort, I deſire them to conſider ſeriouſly the true State of their Souls, which, I think, are not ſo indiſpos'd, but they may juſtly hope to partake of God's Grace, and receive benefit by the Sacraments. For tho' there be generally an obſtinacy of Judgment in them,

them, which makes them difficult to be govern'd; tho' there be a ſecret Pride at the Root, and not ſo true a diſtruſt and knowledge of themſelves, nor ſubmiſſive confidence in God, as there ought, which cauſes that ſurprize and vexation at their own failings; yet ſince all this works inſenſibly in them, rather thro' indiſpoſion and ill temper of Body, than by affectation or choice, 'tis to be hop'd, they have not the Guilt, but only the Misfortune, of theſe Evils. And then on the other ſide, there's a great Portion of good at the bottom of all: For why is it, they diſquiet and afflict themſelves ſo much? Does it not ariſe from the Apprehenſion they have of not doing their Duty, and having offended God, and the fear of his being angry with them? Why is it they conſult their Director, ſo frequently deſire to be adviſ'd? Is not this an Argument of their not being in love with their Failings, and an evident deſire of Amendment? There's a good Will, therefore a good Deſire, a good Heart at the bottom, and commonly a total Alienation of the Mind from all the Follies, Vanities, and Vicious Corruptions of the World; ſo that their whole Concern is center'd in the great Affair of their Soul, the avoiding of Evil, the Service of God, and their own

own Salvation: And tho' they are ſubject to very great Spiritual Indiſcretions, and ill Management; yet ſince their Hearts are ſincere in God, he cannot poſſibly reject them, nor can they reaſonably doubt of being prepar'd for receiving Benefit in the Sacraments. Let them learn Patience in their Trouble, Humility under the Conduct of God, be contented with the Meaſure of Grace he is pleas'd to give them, and endeavour to be obedient to their Director, and, no queſtion, they'll come by degrees out of their Oppreſſion and Darkneſs, and rejoice in our Lord.

Third Sunday *of* Advent.

GOSPEL,

S. *John* 1. V. 19. ends V. 28.

HE *confeſs'd, and denied it not; and he confeſs'd, that I am not Chriſt.* This is the Anſwer of S. *John Baptiſt* to the *Jews*, enquiring of him, if he was the Meſſias.

The whole time of *Advent*, ought to be a Preparation of Chriſtians for Celebrating the Feſtival of the Birth of Chriſt. God then humbled himſelf for Man, and

Man

Man cannot better prepare for the due acknowledgment of this Mercy, than by ſincerely humbling himſelf before God: For this end, the Church propoſes this Day the Example of the *Baptiſt*, who, by his Auſterity, Preaching, and the Adminiſtration of a New Baptiſm, having given ſufficient occaſion to the *Jews* of ſuppoſing him to be the Meſſias, and being now queſtion'd upon the Point, poſitively denies it, takes no Advantage of their Miſtakes, and owns no more; than he is oblig'd to by the force of their demands, in doing right to Truth.

This Spirit of Humility muſt be our Patern in the Preparation we make. If Chriſt humbled himſelf, we cannot be his Diſciples, but by a like Humility. We may come to ſome part of this, if we ask every one, of our ſelves, the Queſtion put to S. *John*; *Tu quis es? Who art thou? Quid dicis de teipſo? What ſay'ſt thou of thy ſelf?* For what can we anſwer? If we look into our ſelves, and there ſee the Uncertainty and Darkneſs of our Underſtanding, the Perverſeneſs of our Will, the Corruption of our Affections, the Blindneſs of our Paſſions: If we conſider our Weakneſs, in the little we can do, of all the Good we propoſe; our Ingratitude, in abuſing the infinite Bleſſings of Heaven; our

our Unreaſonableneſs, in acting contrary to what we believe; in providing more for this Life, than for that, which is Eternal; in our daily Sollicitude for things of the leaſt Concern, and neglecting the greater; if we number all our Sins, which are the daily Effects of this our Weakneſs and Corruption; what can we anſwer to the Queſtion propos'd; but that we are, of all Creatures, the moſt unhappy; that we deſerve nothing, but Contempt, Reproach, and Puniſhment?

Then, if we make but one reflection farther, and ſee, notwithſtanding all this almoſt infinite Miſery, how proud we are of our ſelves, how eager of Eſteem and Love, how much we labour to magnifie this Contemptible Clay, this ſinful Duſt; that this is the general Buſineſs of our Thoughts, Money, and Time; that to this we turn whatever we receive from God; this is ſo great an exaggeration of our Miſery, that if our Neceſſities, and great Poverty, do not work in us a true Humility, the Conſideration of our Pride, at leaſt, cannot fail of humbling us.

By a due reflection upon theſe Particulars, and thus making an Antidote of the Poyſon, we may come ſo far, at leaſt, as to conclude, there are Reaſons enough to oblige us to that Humility, to which the

Church this Day calls us; and that if this be a proper Means of preparing us for the Benefits of Christ's Nativity, it must be our want of thinking, if we are found unprepar'd.

But however, it is not thinking only will do the Work; but we must pursue our Thoughts with Industrious and Watchful Endeavours, for suppressing the usual Effects of Pride, which otherwise, being a subtle Evil, will be often breaking forth, and when all other Avenues are secur'd, will make an Advantage of Humility it self, and perswade the Christian to be proud of being Humble. A Watch therefore must be set to observe all its Motions, and some Particular Resolutions taken.

As First, From the Example of the *Baptist*, not to value our selves, according to the mistaken Opinion, which others have of us. 'Tis easie for such as are Cautious, by an Artificial Management, to raise an esteem in those, whose Charity makes them judge the whole Man to be proportion'd to that side, which is ever set next them; this gains their Applause, and becomes a Temptation to those, whom they commend, of measuring themselves from such undesigning Flatteries. Here then is to be the Christian's Care, to look farther

farther than they do, and by caſting his Eye upon his whole ſelf, to put all his Infirmities, which are known to him, into the Ballance againſt their Praiſes; and then ſee, if he has any reaſon to be proud; eſpecially, when he muſt confeſs, that theſe are his own proper Stock, and that as to whatever is commendable in him, it is all the Gift of God, and the Praiſe due to him: Then if he conſiders, how Unworthy he is of all ſuch Bleſſings, he will find Reaſons to adore the Goodneſs of the Giver, and to plant a ſeaſonable Humility upon that Stock, where Pride was upon the ſtart, and juſt ſhooting forth.

Secondly, To diſown with poſitiveneſs all miſtaken Commendations; and yet not in ſuch a manner, as by endeavouring to be thought ſincere, to retain the greateſt part of the Honour deſign'd him.

Thirdly, Not ſo to renounce falſe Characters or Titles, as to ſubſtitute others in their place, which are true: For tho' here be Truth in the Caſe, yet 'tis ſuch, as is more for the Advantage of Pride, than it could have from their Miſtakes, which tho' pleaſing for the preſent, cannot laſt, when it is ſeen to be nothing but Smoke.

Fourthly, Not to be forward in acknowledging in publick, even the Gifts receiv'd

from God, farther than is neceſſary for doing right to Truth; and then ſo to do it, that the Praiſe may be given to God, and Man humbled in the Confeſſion of his unworthineſs in reſpect of ſuch Favours. So far from the Example of St. *John*: But becauſe Man is many more ways in danger of Pride; therefore,

Fifthly, He is to be careful, not to entertain Contemptible Thoughts of others, upon any real or ſuppos'd Advantages in himſelf, whether of Nature, Fortune, or Grace; but to conſider himſelf in them, whom he is inclin'd to undervalue, and ſee in them, what he would be, did not the Hand of Mercy make the diſtinction.

Sixthly, Not with Anxiety to diſquiet himſelf upon his experienc'd Infirmities, or accidental Occaſions of Abjection or Diſ-eſteem: For that ſuch Trouble is the Effect of Pride; whilſt true Humility, ſubmits with Patience to all manner of Trouble; quietly, but ſtrongly, labours to amend; and while earneſt for help, yet with the ſame quiet, waits God's Time and Pleaſure.

Seventhly, Not to yield to voluntary Diſturbance, upon being Reprov'd, or upon real or ſuppos'd Contempts: Becauſe this Diſturbance has Pride at the Root; and true Humility, being ever ſenſible of its

its unworthineſs, acknowledges the Evil it meets, to be much leſs than it deſerves.

Eighthly, Not to be too eager in maintaining his Opinion in indifferent Matters, nor be much concern'd when contradicted; becauſe Poſitiveneſs, Stiffneſs, and a Paſſionate Concern, are the Fruit of Pride; whereas the Victory and Triumph of Humility is in yielding; eſpecially where Juſtice and Neceſſary Truths do not oblige to their defence.

Ninthly, Not to engage in angry or peeviſh Quarrels; becauſe Pride produces Paſſion, and the Spirit of Humility ſtudies Peace, chuſing rather to overcome by Suffering with Meekneſs, than to maintain an unneceſſary Cauſe by Contention.

Laſtly, To avoid all manner of Affectation, whether in Words or Geſture, and obſerve Moderation in whatever belongs to Dreſſing, Table, Furniture or State: For if a Chriſtian knows himſelf a Sinner, and in this ſees Contempt and Puniſhment his due, Humility will be regulated by this Juſtice; and it muſt be Pride, that is induſtrious in ſeeking Honour and Greatneſs for that, which deſerves it not, but is wholly unworthy of all ſuch Courting. Here then the Chriſtian is to ſee, that under the cover of conſulting Decency, and the Mode, he flatters not thoſe

Inclinations of Pride, which lead him contrary to the Goſpel, and put him upon pleaſing and magnifying himſelf in all things, when the leaſt reflection will inform him, that this is acting contrary to Juſtice, in there placing Rewards, where Puniſhment is due, in ſtudying to gratifie the Unworthy, and raiſe the Offender, who ought to be humbled.

Theſe Endeavours are neceſſary for thoſe, who deſire to prepare themſelves for the Mercies of their Redeemer, who comes in the Spirit of Humility: The *Baptiſt* has given us an Example; but 'tis thou, O Jeſus, muſt give us Strength to ſtand againſt the Attempts of the Pride, that is within us: 'Tis a powerful and ſubtle Evil, O God, and if we have not thy help, we ſhall fall a prey to its Force, or its Snares. Help me then, and have Compaſſion on this Preſumptuous Clay; let me now humble my ſelf in the Conſideration of thy Infinite Mercy, and my own Unworthineſs; and ſince thou haſt humbled thy ſelf, in ſtooping to all, that is contemptible, for my ſake, teach me to follow thee in all Humility, and to renounce all Pride, as much in Fact, as I do in Profeſſion.

Fourth Sunday *of* Advent.

EPISTLE,

1 *Cor.* C. 4. V. 1. ends V. 5.

IT *is requir'd of thoſe, that are Diſpenſers* of the Myſteries of God, *that they be Faithful.* S. *Paul* having inform'd the *Corinthians* of his own Character, that they ought to regard him, as likewiſe all the Paſtors of God's Church, as the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Diſpenſers of the Myſteries of God; that the Heavenly Treaſures are entruſted in their Hands; that in the Name, and by the Authority of God, they are to inſtruct the Faithful in his Holy Myſteries, and apply to them the Merits and Graces of Chriſt's Paſſion; then adds, That the thing requir'd from theſe Diſpenſers, is, That they be Faithful.

1. To God, in Publiſhing his Sacred Truths with Zeal, Defending them with Courage, and Managing them with Prudence.

2. To Jeſus Chriſt, in Honouring His Miniſtry by a Holy Life reſembling his; in Preaching his Myſteries, and the Maxims of his Goſpel, in all Purity, with-

out diſguiſing them in Favour of the World or Corruption; and in applying the Sacraments of his Grace with Charity, and the Spirit of Diſcretion; not admitting the Unworthy to prophane them.

3. They are to be faithful to the Church, and the Souls under their Charge, in leading them in the Ways of God's Commandments, with a Watchful and Laborious Diligence, in ſupporting them with a Chriſtian Condeſcendence, and Encouraging them by their good Example.

Laſtly, They are to be Faithful, in not ſeeking, what they have renounc'd, not to be Great, to be Rich, to be Powerful; but uſing all Endeavours to Eſtabliſh his Power only, whoſe Miniſters they are; being always in the diſpoſition of good Servants, ever ready to Labour, ready to Obey. Thus are Paſtors to be Faithful in the whole Charge they have undertaken; and to be wanting in any part of it, either of Inſtruction, Watchfulneſs, Labour, or Good Example, *&c.* is to be wanting in what S. *Paul* ſays, is requir'd of them; which is truly ſo very great, that were it ſeriouſly conſider'd, as to the Difficulty and Concern of every Particular, I think very few would thruſt themſelves upon it, and none engage in it, without a great apprehenſion and diſtruſt of themſelves,

and

and daily ſeeking the Aſſiſtance of the Divine Spirit to carry them thro' it.

As for my own part, I find the Charge ſo great, that whether in the Worthy approaching every Day to the Altar; in inſtructing the Ignorant; in ſpurring on the Slothful; in treating with Vicious and Worldly Souls; in giving advice in Affairs of Eternity; in adminiſtring the Sacraments; in diſtinguiſhing Weakneſs from Unworthineſs, ſo as not to terrifie and diſcourage the one, or admit the other; in diſcerning betwixt Practice and Right, and infinite other Perplexities that occur, I muſt needs confeſs my Weakneſs, I know not how to be Faithful to what I have undertaken, I am daily at a loſs, *contriſtatus ſum in exercitatione mea*; I labour as under a Burthen; and if God does not aſſiſt, direct and ſupport me, I ſhall be infinitely wanting to my Obligation. How ſhall I render an Account of all thoſe Souls, who have been committed to my Charge! Happy are thoſe Paſtors, who in preparing for this Sacred Function, have taken Care, by the laborious Exercciſes of Mortification and Virtue, to obtain a plentiful Aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, by whoſe Direction they may be ſecur'd againſt all the Miſchievous Effects of Humane Darkneſs, Weakneſs, Ignorance,

Negligence and Indiſcretion; and who, every Day, thro' the great Senſe of their own inability, earneſtly implore his Help and Light, to carry them thro' all the Difficulties of their Obligation, and make them Faithful to every part of it, whether in regard of themſelves, or their Neighbours. And certainly none are more unhappy, amongſt all Chriſtians, than thoſe, who having the Charge of Paſtors, have not the Paſtoral Spirit; who have undertaken it on Temporal Motives, without being call'd of God; who have not been Sollicitous to obtain the Divine Succours ſuitable to their Obligation; who live the common Life of the World, giving Encouragement to Liberty and Corruption; and if they have but made their own Neſt ſo well, as to be pretty ſecure againſt Temporal Want themſelves, think little of the Spiritual Neceſſities of their Neighbours, or of being Faithful to the many and great Duties of their State: Can theſe ever expect the happy welcome of, *Euge ſerve bone & Fidelis!* Deliver me, O God, and all my Brethren, the Paſtors of thy Church, from this Fatal Blindneſs, and by the Power of thy Spirit, having remov'd theſe Evils, make us Faithful to our Charge.

Paſtors then are to be Faithful; but what

what is this to the People? Yes, it is to them: For as it is requir'd of Paſtors, that they be Faithful, ſo the ſame is requir'd of the People: And if the Paſtor be Faithful, and the People not, the Paſtor's Fidelity will be the aggravation of their Crimes: If he carefully labours to inform them of their Duty, and they take no Care to learn; if he lays before them the Maxims of the Goſpel in their purity, and preſſes them to live by the Spirit of Chriſt, and they attend to the Maxims of the World, and follow the Practices and Liberties of Men; his Fruitleſs Labours will be their Judgment, and they ſhall not only give an Account of their own Sins, but likewiſe of all the Seed and Care, that has been loſt upon them. The People therefore are to be Faithful, as well as the Paſtor.

And this ſtill on another account: For tho' Paſtors have the Charge of diſpenſing the Myſteries of God, and for this reaſon, are to be Faithful; yet all others, of what Condition ſoever, have their Charge under God too, have a Truſt repoſed in them, and therefore are likewiſe to be Faithful to him, to whom they muſt all render an Account, how they have ſatisfied their Truſt. Magiſtrates, and all in Office and Power, have a Charge under God,

God, of Adminiſtring Juſtice, and anſwering all the Obligations they have undertaken; and if Theſe make their Employments ſubſervient only to their Intereſt, ſeek only to enrich themſelves, let Humane Reſpects, Favour or Party be the Rule of their Conduct; how are they Faithful to their Truſt? Here it is, Judges, Juſtices, Councellors, Advocates, Attorneys, Collectors, Overſeers of the Poor, Guardians, Executors, Truſtees, *&c.* are in particular to examine their Management; for as far as theſe act without regard to Juſtice and Truth, byaſs'd by any private Conſideration; as far as any Parties concern'd ſuffer thro' their ſloth or neglect, ſo far are they Faithleſs to their Duties, and muſt anſwer it to the Supreme Overſeer, who keeps an exact Regiſter of all their Proceedings, where their own unjuſt Gain, and the Loſſes of others, will appear in Judgment againſt them. Again, Husband and Wife have a Charge, under God, of each other, and Both of their Children and Servants; every Houſekeeper a Charge of their Family; Shopkeepers are to be Faithful to thoſe they deal with; Workmen and Labourers to thoſe that employ them; School-Maſters to their Scholars; Children to their Parents; and all manner of Servants,

vants to their Maſters. Each ſtate has its particular Obligations reſpectively belonging to it; and 'tis not ſufficient for Chriſtians to obſerve the General Duties, in which all are concern'd, ſet down in the Commandments; but they are to be exact too in ſatisfying all ſuch Obligations, which their Profeſſion or State brings on them, as they ſtand recorded in the Epiſtles of Holy Writ, where S. *Paul* lays before every one the Duties of their ſtate, and requires them to be Faithful in them. 'Tis for want of this Care, there are ſo many, who, according to the General Method of their Lives, ſeem not to offend directly againſt any one of the Commandments, and therefore have the Reputation of Good Chriſtians; and yet at the ſame time, are very great Sinners, in being notoriouſly wanting to the Obligations of their Condition, are Ill Parents, Careleſs Maſters, Wicked Truſtees, Unjuſt Stewards, *&c.*

And now, tho' there cannot well be any, who are not thus particularly engag'd ſome way or other, either as *Parents*, *Maſters*, &c. yet if there be ſuch, who think themſelves exempt; let them remember, they have a Charge ſtill, in which they are to be Faithful; a Charge of their *Time*, of their *Eſtate*, of their *Health*, and

and of their *Soul*: Theſe they have in Truſt, and 'tis requir'd of them to be Juſt and Faithful in this their Charge: And tho' they may think, they have but little to do, I think they have more to do than any; it being a very difficult Task for People, who have no Employment, to be Faithful to their Truſt; ſince their whole Life is a continual Temptation, both as to miſ-ſpending their *Time* and their *Money*, and doing injury to the *Health* both of *Body* and *Soul*: And, I fear, there are none leſs prepar'd to give an Account of theſe, than they who enjoy the largeſt ſhare of them; and yet they are things, of which they muſt one Day give an Account; and how ſhall they do this, if they are not Faithful in them? We beſeech thee therefore, O God, to teach all thy Faithful this Leſſon, that they may ſeriouſly conſider all they have received from thee, and likewiſe the full extent of all the Truſt and Charge they hold under thee: Give to Paſtors and People Grace and Strength proportion'd to their ſeveral Duties, that overcoming all Difficulties, they may be found Faithful, when ſummon'd to give up their Accounts to Thee.

Fourth Sunday *of* Advent.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 3. V. 1. ends V. 6.

JOhn came *Preaching the Baptiſm of Penance for the Remiſſion of Sins.* 'Tis an account the Evangeliſt gives of S. *John Baptiſt*, who was ſent to prepare the World for receiving Chriſt: He came Preaching the Baptiſm of Penance, calling upon all to forſake their Evil Ways, and do Penance for their Sins, that ſo they might be in a Diſpoſition for partaking of the Mercy deſign'd them, in the Coming of the Meſſias; for that the End of Chriſt's Coming being to make War againſt Sin, and Triumph over it by his Death, they could not be fitted for his Coming, who were engag'd in an Intereſt quite oppoſite to his. If this was the Preparation then, it muſt be ſo now; for Chriſt being the ſame Yeſterday, and to Day, the Diſpoſition is the ſame, which at all times is requir'd in thoſe, who deſire to find the Benefit of his Coming. The Preaching therefore of S. *John* muſt be heard in our Days, and all muſt do Penance.

It is ſo far heard and obſerv'd, that it is a General Practice of Chriſtians, at this time, to prepare for the Worthy Celebration of the approaching Feſtival, by going to the Sacrament of Penance; and if they do it ſo, as to obtain Pardon of their Sins, they anſwer the Summons of the *Baptiſt*, and will not be diſappointed as to other Effects, which will be the Reward of their Labours. But here is the Point, to perform this Duty in ſuch a manner, that the Pardon of their Sins may be the Fruit of their Endeavours; for I cannot but fear, that in many Chriſtians, Cuſtom or Neglect ſo far takes from them the true Senſe of their Duty, that they loſe the Benefit of the beſt Inſtitutions; and while they ſeem to go to the Fountains of Mercy, return with the encreaſe of their Sins, and the Wrath of God provok'd againſt them, by the Abuſe of his Goodneſs.

This Misfortune cannot be prevented, but by a Careful Performance of this great Duty, to which we are now call'd, with a due regard to every part of the Sacrament of Penance. The Examination muſt be made with Diligence, ſo as not only to call over the groſſer Faults, and ſuch as are obſervable to every Eye; but likewiſe to ſearch into all the Paſſions, look under

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all their Folds, and be moſt inquiſitive into thoſe, which Pride and Self-love are moſt Sollicitous to keep undiſcover'd. Beſides the violation of General Duties, the Obligations of Particular States are to be brought to a ſtrict Examen: And the Argument of Innocence muſt not be taken from the Practice or Cuſtom of others like themſelves, but from the Will of God deliver'd in the Commandments, and Expounded by Chriſt in the Goſpel; becauſe Cuſtom, even of thoſe reputed Good, ſeems to Authorize many things, which the Goſpel Diſapproves. But while this Examen is made with Care, there muſt be a Care too, that this Diligence in ſearching be not confounded with Anxiety, and an endleſs Sollicitude; this is a Caution neceſſary for thoſe, whoſe Melancholly or Exceſſive Fears are too forward in multiplying Difficulties, and under the pretext of a ſtricter ſearch, raiſe ſuch a Darkneſs, as takes away their Sight. Wherefore the Rule of doing all with Moderation, muſt take place here, ſo that there be no wilful Omiſſion, thro' Sloth or Neglect, nor any Confuſion rais'd by the Impertinencies of a reſtleſs and unſatisfied Fear.

The Examination of Conſcience being duly made, the Chriſtian is not preſently to run to his Confeſſor; he is to remember,

ber, that Contrition is to go before Confeſſion; and for this End, after his Examen, muſt make it the Buſineſs of his whole Soul, to raiſe in his Heart a ſincere deteſtation of all his Sins; and this being a particular Gift of God, he ought to ſeek it by Earneſt Prayer, beſeeching God to change his Heart, turn it from all Evil, and confirm him with ſuch a Reſolution of Amendment, that he may rather chuſe Death, than return to his Sins. And here the Penitent ought to be watchful againſt Deluſion; for it being eaſie, at ſuch a time, to think of a Change, to ſee the Reaſonableneſs of it, and to have the Spirit ſenſibly touch'd with the Horror of paſt Sins; 'tis very eaſie miſtaking theſe Motions of the Thoughts and Spirit for a real Change of the Heart; when, it may be, nothing of all this has reach'd it; but, notwithſtanding theſe promiſing Appearances, it may ſtill be a Slave to its former Diſorders, and only with its Chains for the preſent hid with Smoke. I do not intend by this, to put Penitents into a total diſtruſt of what they do; but only deſire, they would not be too haſty in concluding their Work to be done; but that having a true Senſe, of how great and difficult a Work it is, for the Heart to be chang'd from the love of Evil, to the love

love of Good, they would take time and pains in it, and not only think of it, or let it be the ſubject of a few weak and paſſing Deſires; but with all the earneſtneſs of their Souls, beg it of Heaven, and back their Prayers with the Tears and Sighs of a Heart proſtrate before God, under the Senſe of its great Miſery and Poverty, and of the Neceſſity of his Grace, for the effecting the deſir'd Change.

In this Point conſiſts the beſt Preparation for Abſolution, and therefore not to be paſs'd over lightly by any, who own themſelves Sinners, and deſire to make their Peace with God: But however, the Method ought to be very different in thoſe Chriſtians, who are ſubject only to ordinary Failings, or by Accident have been ſurpriz'd in ſome greater Sin, and in others, who find themſelves engag'd in Vice, and their Hearts diſorder'd with an Habitual Affection to Sin: For theſe latter cannot be ſincere in their Repentance, nor ſerious in their Grief, for what is paſt; except, with the Publicans and Soldiers, who, upon the *Baptiſt*'s Preaching Penance, came to him, and ask'd this Queſtion, *Quid ergo faciemus? What therefore muſt we do?* Except, I ſay, they ask this Queſtion, and conſider it well with themſelves, and their Director: Becauſe

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no Repentance can be ſincere, but in proportion to the Abhorrence of paſt Diſorders, and the Reſolutions of Amendment; and how can theſe Reſolutions be ſincere, if, being engag'd in Evil, they conſider not the violence of their Paſſions, the ſtrength of their Diſorder, and what Pains and Means may be neceſſary for overcoming and bringing them under Government.

Theſe cannot but ſee, a great Change is to be wrought in their Hearts, and that for effecting it, there muſt be a Neceſſity of many Self-denials, of much Prayer and Reading, of avoiding many Occaſions, that lead them into Evil, of great Watchfulneſs, and of often conſulting their Spiritual Phyſician: If then the Work they ſeem to undertake, is a Work of Difficulty, and they neither take it into conſideration themſelves, nor ask of others, What they have to do? Or, What is neceſſary for accompliſhing it? 'Tis moſt certain there can be no Sincerity in their Thoughts of Amendment, and all the Appearance of Grief for paſt Sins, is only Counterfeit, and like a Houſe, without a Foundation, Built on the Sands, which cannot ſtand.

Wherefore all, in theſe unhappy Circumſtances, are oblig'd ſeriouſly to conſider this Point, and from it may ſee too much

much grounds to fear, that if in going to the Sacrament of Penance, they pretend to grieve for paſt Sins, without laying the Ax to the Root, they do nothing of what the *Baptiſt* preſcribes, and the Abſolution, they receive, can have no effect: And what then muſt be the Conſequence of their Communions in this ſtate, but what S. *Paul* declares, Of eating and drinking Damnation to themſelves, without diſcerning the Body of our Lord?

If there be a true Contrition for Sin, it is to be hop'd, there will be nothing wanting in the other Parts of this Sacrament. For this end, the Penitent's Rule muſt be, to lay open with Sincerity the true ſtate of his Soul, without diſguiſing, excuſing or concealing any thing, that ought to be expreſs'd: For if Private Conſiderations take place of Duty; if Pride, Fear or Shame, ſtop the Mouth of Penitents, the ſame will ſtop the Mercies of God; and the Effect of ſuch Confeſſions will be only to draw upon them the weight of new Crimes, in abuſing Holy Things, in diſſembling with the Miniſters of God, and lying to the Holy Ghoſt. And what a Mockery are they made to the Devil, who, upon pretext of Shame, perſwades them to encreaſe the Matter of their Shame; ſince, if ever they think of

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finding Mercy, they muſt not only mention what was before omitted, but likewiſe this their Sacrilegious Diſſembling too!

There muſt be Care likewiſe in performing the Penance enjoin'd, and that in the true Spirit of Penance; for if there be Delay, Neglect, or Forgetfulneſs, in ſatisfying it, there is too much reaſon to ſuſpect ſuch Chriſtians to be wanting in the Senſe of their paſt Guilt, and of the Mercy of God, who is ſo eaſie in remitting it.

With theſe Cautions ought all Penitents to come at this time to the Sacrament of Propitiation, that ſo their Souls being cleans'd from Sin, they may be prepar'd to meet their Redeemer in ſuch a manner, as to partake of his Mercies, thro' which alone they can hope for Salvation. Help us all, O God, in this Point; grant us a ſincere Repentance of all our Sins, and permit us not, either by Neglect or Diſſembling, to pervert thy Holy Inſtitutions, but that we may find Life, where thou haſt commanded us to ſeek it.

Sunday *within the* Octave *of* Chriſtmas.

EPISTLE,

Gal. C. 4. V. 1. ends V. 7.

THe fulneſs of time being come, God ſent his Son. In this ſhort Epiſtle, St. *Paul* lays before us the Myſtery of Man's Redemption, undertook by Chriſt, and which we Celebrate at this time: That God ſent his Only Son, the Second Perſon of the B. Trinity, into the World; that he became Man, took a Body, not created immediately by the Hand of God, as was that of *Adam*, but form'd of a Woman; that he was Born an Infant, was ſubject to the Law made for Sinners; that he offer'd himſelf a Sacrifice for Sin; rais'd Sinners to the Dignity of being the Children of God; open'd his Breaſt, and gave his Spirit to Sinners, and admitted his very Enemies and Murtherers, to be Co-heirs with him of his Eternal Inheritance. This is the Bleſſing, the Patriarchs and Prophets ſo many Ages ſigh'd and pray'd for, and which being accompliſh'd in the fulneſs

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of time, we at present Celebrate, but can never sufficiently adore; it being the wonderful Effect of an infinite Mercy, without any the least desert on our part. For all Mankind Universally lying under the Guilt of Sin, was by this render'd an Enemy to God, and incapable of doing any thing, whereby to make peace with him; and therefore had he not been Redeem'd, must necessary have been lost for Ever. But what then! Would God have been less happy, if Man had been for ever Miserable? Or if God had left Man, as he did the Faln Angels, under the Eternal Guilt of his Sin, would this have lessen'd that infinite Bliss, which God Essentially Enjoys within himself? Nothing of all this: And therefore, as the leaving the unhappy Angels in their Sin, was the Effect of his Justice; so his redeeming Man from Sin, was the sole Effect of his Mercy. But then to deliver up his Son, for to redeem a Slave, to subject him to all the Miseries of Man; to expose him to a Life of Contempt and Reproaches, to Persecutions, Torments, and the most Ignominious Death, this is the overflowing and excess of such an infinite Mercy, that as we believe it without comprehending it so, I fear, we Celebrate the Memory of it, without seriously thinking of it, or returning the least part of

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that Adoration and Gratitude, which we are truly oblig'd. If we did but once seriously reflect what it is to be running headlong into Hell; and when now on the very brink, consider the Son of God taking on him the Punishment due to our Sins, and offering his most Sacred Blood as the Price of our Redmption from this State of Misery; and not only to rescue us from Eternal Death, but even entitle us to Everlasting Happiness; this reflection would be sufficient to imprint a lasting Sense of Gratitude and Love in our Hearts, not to be forgot under all the Attempts of Worldly Flatteries or Terrors, and sufficient to preserve us in a perpetual Fidelity to so Merciful a God, so Loving a Redeemer; 'tis for this End the Church has appointed this yearly Solemnity, to encourage all her Children, not only to glance at it in a passing Thought, but to offer it for the more serious Entertainment of their Hearts all the eight Days of this *Octave*; and those who feel not a Sense of it, ought to be confounded at least at their Insensibility: The same ought to be renew'd every Day, as often as we bow at the most Holy Name of *Jesus*, letting this external respect be the Expression and Fruit of our Inward Love and Adoration, so justly due to the Mercies of our Re-

deemer: The ſame is daily ſuggeſted to us in the *Creed*, and St. *John*'s *Goſpel*; for why is it, that at the repeating thoſe Words; *He took Fleſh and was made Man:* And, *The Word was made Fleſh*; both Prieſt and People are commanded to kneel down, but only to be a continual Remembrance of this great Mercy, and excite in them all the Sentiments of Reverence and Gratitude, the daily Tribute of every True Believer?

But more than this is expected from Chriſtians; for ſince Chriſt redeem'd us, that, as the Apoſtle here ſays, we might become the Adopted Children of God, and receiving his Spirit, might in that cry, *Abba, Father*; every Chriſtian ought to give Proof of his Redemption, by manifeſting in his Life this Adoption, and that he lives by the Spirit of Chriſt: So that, as as thoſe unhappy Souls, who have not a Knowledge or Practical Faith of this Myſtery, are directed wholly by the Principles of Corrupt Nature, by the Suggeſtions of Fleſh and Blood, by Self-love and the Maxims of the World, and thus ſhew themſelves the Children of the Firſt *Adam*; ſo true Chriſtians, ought ſo powerfully to be influenc'd by the Rules of the Goſpel, in Contradiction to all other Inclinations, as to evidence the being of Chriſt's

Christ's Spirit within them, and consequently, that they are the Children of God. And is this the Character of Christians? 'Tis the Scripture Character of what they ought to be; they are all oblig'd to Adore God in this Spirit, to live by this Spirit, and walk by this Spirit: But so miserable is the State of *Christendom* at present, that 'tis enough to draw Sighs and Tears from all those faithful Souls, who have any love for God or his Church, to see such a Universal Corruption amongst them, that there are great numbers living in the open Practice of Vice, so as to be far beneath the degree of Moral Heathens; and that others who have a horror of this Wickedness, and pretend to Piety, come yet so much short of what they ought to be, that instead of living by the Spirit of Christ, they live by the Spirit of Self-love and the World. Let but any one view the general Method; how much there is every where, of Uncharitableness, Dissensions and Detractions; how great a Zeal for Interest and Parties; how little for Justice and Truth; how all generally seek themselves, admire Vanity and Follies, study their Pleasure and Ease, neglect Order and Discipline in their Families, avoid every thing that mortifies, and all Works of Penance; and then

obſerve the common Exceſs in Tables, Cloaths, and Furniture, *&c.* and then tell me, what there is in all this of the Spirit of Chriſt, or wherein a Chriſtian can truly ſay, *Abba, Father*, whilſt Chriſt is not the Father of any thing of this, but moſt certainly, *Self-love* and the *World*? Not that it can be expected, in this State of Corruption; a Chriſtian ſhould be wholly exempt from the Effects of theſe Evils; no, this is not a priviledge even of the beſt: But yet ſo much is expected from them, as to have a diſlike of every degree of Corruption, to which they are ſubject, to lament this their Miſery, humble themſelves under it, make War againſt it, and by Holy Exerciſes of Piety and Self-denial, leſſen or weaken it what they are able. But as for living in the profeſs'd practice of them, approving and ſupporting them, making the Improvement of them their Study, the Subject of their Thoughts, of their daily Expence and Entertainment, and thinking themſelves well in this Profeſſion; all this is wholly diſagreeable to a Chriſtian's Character, is not conformable to the Principles of the Goſpel, and St. *Paul*; and has nothing of the Spirit of Chriſt in it; being the Life of the Natural Man, but not of the Spiritual: And while they thus far depart from the Ways of Chriſt, following

lowing a Rule, which is not his, I desire them seriously to consider their State, and earnestly beg of God to establish them in a more secure way, where the solid Effects of their Redemption may be more manifest in them.

Sunday *within the* Octave *of* Christmas.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 2. V. 33. ends V. 40.

Behold he is set for the Ruin and Resurrection of many in Israel, *and for a Sign, which shall be contradicted.* These words are part of *Simeon*'s Prophecy concerning Christ, when he was brought, according to the *Jewish* Law, by his Parents into the Temple; and, being Inspir'd by the Holy Ghost, oblige us to mix this Festival of Joy with Fear; since we are here inform'd, that however Christ comes as a Redeemer, he shall not be for the Resurrection of all, but for the Ruin of many. For have we not reason to fear, when we see our selves in hazard, not only from our own Corruption, and the infinite

Snares of the World, and the Devil; but that there is Ruin threatned even from him, in whom are center'd all our hopes, and who has undertaken to ſave us? While we Rejoice therefore in this Holy Feſtival, let us Fear too.

But how is he a Jeſus or Saviour, and yet ſet for the Ruin of many? It is moſt certain, this can be no End of his Coming, neither can this Work of Infinite Mercy in the Redemption of Man, have a Deſign of being the Ruin of any. Whatever Ruin therefore follows upon it, it muſt be charg'd upon the Wickedneſs of Man, in abuſing that, which God has intended for his good.

It muſt be charg'd on the Obſtinacy of Sinners: The End of Chriſt's Coming is to make War upon Sin, and by giving himſelf a Sacrifice, to deliver Repenting Sinners from the Guilt of their Offences, and reverſe the Sentence pronounc'd againſt them. Here is Salvation deſign'd for all, and therefore all are call'd to forſake their Sins, that they may partake of the Mercy: The only Ruin is againſt Sin, and if this is to be deſtroy'd, none can periſh, but thoſe alone, who obſtinately adhering to Sin, chuſe to periſh with it, and be involv'd in the Ruin. Sin here, in the Redemption of Man, is to be conſi-

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der'd as *Sodom*, when the Cry of its Wickedneſs had aſcended to call for Vengeance from Heaven; and as *Lot*'s Sons-in-Law not obeying the Summons of Mercy, but chuſing to abide in the City, were conſum'd in its Flames; ſo thoſe here, who being mercifully invited to flee from Sin, becauſe it is to be deſtroy'd, if they ſtand out obſtinate againſt this Goodneſs, it is no leſs than their own Choice, if they periſh with it. See then, Chriſtians, God declares War againſt Sin; the Son of God, the true Angel of Peace, publiſhes the Sentence pronounc'd againſt it, and gives his Blood, that you may be exempt from the Ruin: If you have a Faith of thoſe Flames, that are prepar'd to conſume it, join your ſelves with *Lot*, and flee from *Sodom*, flee from Sin, forſake your evil Ways; for otherwiſe the Mercy of God will be no Mercy to you; but being perverſe in Sin, you muſt fall with it, and bear a part in its Ruins. And whence then is your Ruin? Thy Deſtruction is from thy ſelf, O *Iſrael*. God calls to Mercy, and you will not hear: Jeſus offers himſelf a Sacrifice for your Redemption, and you refuſe to have a part in it: Is your Ruin then from Chriſt, or your ſelves?

And this Ruin is particularly aggravated from the Contempt of that Mercy, which is offer'd for the Redemption of Sinners. For tho' all obſtinate Sinners muſt unavoidably fall before the Juſtice of God; yet thoſe certainly will find the greater Damnation, who have with Stubbornneſs ſtood out againſt the greateſt Mercies. This is ſufficiently declar'd in the Goſpel, where Chriſt pronounces Woes againſt *Capernaum*, *Corazain*, and *Bethſaida*, and ſays, It ſhall be more tolerable at the Day of Judgment for *Sodom*, than for them; becauſe they had made no Advantage of the many Wonders wrought in them, but ſtill continued in their Sins, notwithſtanding theſe Attempts of Mercy for their Converſion. If then the encreaſe of Mercies adds to the weight of their Crimes, who receive no Benefit from them; may not we here comprehend, how Chriſt may be ſet for the Ruin of many; ſince knowing, how Infinite is the Mercy of his undertaking our Redemption, and how very few there are, who lay hold of this Mercy, 'tis plain the Contempt of this Goodneſs will be their greater Ruin? Becauſe the Goodneſs of God invites to Repentance, and the ſtronger this Invitation is, the greater is the Obſtinacy of thoſe that reſiſt; wherefore

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they cannot fail, according to their hard and impenitent Heart, of heaping to themselves Anger in the Day of Wrath.

If none were in this Danger, but those, whose Incredulity and Criminal Lives seem to pronounce them already judg'd, it might afford some Comfort to others; but since the Text, in declaring Christ to be a Sign, which shall be contradicted, seems to include all such, as walk not by the Spirit of Christ, but in Contradiction to it; we have all reason to fear, lest we be involv'd in the Ruin. For if with a considerate Eye we look first on Christ, and then taking an impartial view of our selves, observe how far we depart from his Humility, Meekness, Moderation, Contempt of the World, and Crucified Life; nay, how far we set up and follow Maxims quite opposite to his, such as justifie Pride, Intemperance, Prodigality, the love of Ease, of the World, and of our Selves; and that according to these Maxims, the greatest part of Christians spend their Time, their Money, and their Lives; have we not reason to suspect our own ways, and see, whether we be not carried away with the Torrent of Custom, and receiv'd Practices; and while we profess Christ, live not in Contradiction to him? Christ is the Truth, and the Way;

and if this be not the Truth and Way, we follow, but others, which the World has set up and commends; I cannot see, but with our suppos'd exemption from what is generally reputed Vicious, we may be easily disappointed in our Expectation, and there find our Ruin, where we inconsiderately hope for Life.

O God, how much have we to fear in this kind! We are on every side encompass'd with Blessings; thy Mercies are daily calling upon us to Repent; and in this Mystery of the Birth of Christ, we see how Sollicitous thou art for our Eternal Good, whilst thou offer'st thy Only Son for our Mediator, and by his Blood open'st us a way to Paradise. This thy Infinite Goodness ought to be a Subject of our present Thanksgiving and Joy, in seeing how much thou valuest our Souls, how much in earnest thou art for our Happiness. But, O God, how much more Miserable shall we be than all Creatures, if we make no Advantage of this thy Mercy! How much more weighty will our Damnation be, than that of the Infidel World, than that of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, if notwithstanding this Chargeable Purchase for our Redemption, we still continue obstinate in our Sins! Permit not this Evil, we beseech Thee, O Jesus, but now

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plead ſtrongly for us, that we may have a true Senſe of thy Mercies, that theſe may awaken our drowſie Souls, and inſpire us with Reſolutions of eſpouſing thy Intereſt and our own, in making War upon all that is ſinful, and never laying down our Arms, till by thy Example and Help we become Victorious, triumphing over the World, over Sin and Death: For 'tis thus only thy Mercies will be our Salvation, and not our Ruin.

If the Feaſt of the Epiphany *falls on a* Sunday, *there are Proper Inſtructions both for that Day, and the* Sunday *following, which is the* Octave, *in that part, which contains Inſtructions for the Feſtivals.*

Sunday *within the* Octave *of the* Epiphany.

EPISTLE,

Rom. C. 12. V. 1. ends V. 5.

Conform not your ſelves to this World; but be reform'd in the newneſs of your Spirit. This Leſſon is often repeated, and 'tis nothing but neceſſary; it being a very difficult

cult thing to live in the World, and not conform to it. Example and Cuſtom are very powerful, and make ſtrong impreſſions on the Soul; and for a Chriſtian to perſwade himſelf not to do what he ſees almoſt every Body do, is the ſame thing as to ſtand againſt the Violence of a Torrent; and yet 'tis in the midſt of this Torrent every Chriſtian is Born, in this he is Educated; and tho' he be not commanded to retire from it, yet he is commanded ſo to reſiſt it, as not to be carried away with it: *Nolite conformari huic ſæculo.* And were this Obligation only in regard of Notorious Irregularities, and Scandalous Vices, the Task were not ſo great, becauſe in this a Chriſtian has the Encouragement of great numbers, who ſo far eſpouſe the Cauſe of Virtue, as to oppoſe every thing, that is openly contrary to it, and ſo they are a mutual help and ſupport to one another: But this Duty extending yet farther, to ſuch Diſorders, which are not reputed contrary to Piety, and are the common practice of the greater number of Chriſtians, who are eſteem'd Regular and Virtuous, this makes the difficulty almoſt inſuperable, ſince by ſtanding againſt theſe, he neceſſarily draws on himſelf the Odium of Particularity and Bigotry, and muſt, by Conſequence, be reputed

ted to condemn all those, who live in the practice of what, by avoiding, he Censures as not allowable in a Follower of the Gospel. And yet this is the Task a Christian must undertake; even this part he must stand against as well as the former; not only resisting the profess'd and open, but also the more hidden Enemies of his Salvation.

Amongst these I reckon all such Christians, who being no ways Scandalous, are yet possess'd with all the Passions of the World, who admire Honours and Preferments, have their Hearts and Thoughts taken up with Vanity, and the Sollicitude of pleasing the World, have a love and esteem for things present, are fond of all Divertisements, study their own Ease and Convenience, are forgetful of the Goods and Evils of the next Life, have a contempt for every thing that this World disesteems; in fine, have all their Affections and Thoughts of present Happiness, regulated by the conformity every thing has either to the Love of themselves, or the Opinion and Esteem of this World. All Persons, whose just Character this is, I cannot but look on as People conforming to the World; that is, doing the very thing St. *Paul* requires all good Christians to avoid: And tho' their number may be very

very great, and their Reputation generally good, yet inasmuch as they take a Course not agreeable to God's Word, their Authority and Practice ought not to prevail on any, that tender their Salvation, to tread over their steps; but their Method is little less to be apprehended, than that of Notorious Offenders.

The reason is already hinted; because 'tis declar'd against by Christ and his Apostles, the best Guides to Eternity; and if it be not expresly sinful, is at least such, as leads to Sin, and evidently hazards Salvation: And therefore, as good Parents, who are Sollicitous for their Childrens good, are not only careful to keep them out of the Company of such as are publick Criminals; but likewise from the Conversation and Familiarity of those who encourage Liberty, and have no regard to any Rules of Order and Discipline in their Families; because they know these are the steps to greater Evils, and in such Company their Children receive such Seeds, which generally, of course, grow up into all manner of Irregularities and Scandals: So those Christians, who are Sollicitous for their own Eternal Welfare, decline not only what is evidently sinful, but whatever leads to it; because they are sensible, this Course carries them upon Rocks and Shelves,

Shelves, whence very few ever get off, but by Shipwrack, and the loſs of all. For this reaſon, *David* is not only content to declare his Abhorrence of all open Iniquity: *Iniquitatem odio habui & abominatus ſum:* But often repeats his Petition to Almighty God, beſeeching him to keep him out of the *Way of Iniquity: Viam iniquitatis amove a me:* And as often prays, that all his ſteps may be directed according to God's Word; *Greſſus meos dirige ſecundum eloquium tuum.* For he knew, that not only *Iniquity*, but likewiſe the *Way of Iniquity* is to be avoided by God's Faithful Servants; and that if all his ſteps were not directed by God's Word, he ſhould ſoon find himſelf out of the Way. Now thus it is with all the Ways of *Self-love* and the *World*; if they do not ariſe to that exceſs, as to be downright Sins; yet whoever walks in them without great caution, will ſoon find himſelf in the *Way of Iniquity*, in the Way of departing from God: It being impoſſible for a Man to ſerve and love Two Maſters: And if once a Heart is poſſeſs'd with the love of the World, admires its Satisfactions and Greatneſs, will not the World ſoon have the command of ſuch a Soul? And how then will it ſerve and obey God? No, God will in the end be forſaken, and the World obey'd.

obey'd. And tho' this may not apear in every ſtep of this diſorder, yet 'tis what inſenſibly grows upon Men; and the unwillingneſs they have of believing themſelves to be in the Way of Iniquity, is the occaſion of their going on in this Way, till they are wholly ſeparated from God. 'Tis this Deluſion, in compliance with their Inclinations to *Themſelves* and the *World*, is the Ruin of Thouſands; and of ſo many Great Families, that are wholly loſt to Piety and Faith, I believe the Greater part may owe all their Miſcarriage to this inconſiderate Blindneſs. They begin at firſt with the love of *Vanity* and *Diverſions*, and look on this as nothing but what Decency and Health exacts from them; they go on under this Cover, till all *Order* and *Diſcipline* is loſt in themſelves and their Families, and no Moderation obſerv'd in their Expences: Hence the *Time of Praying and Reading in the Evenings*, is often given to Company and Entertainments; and ill Hours in going to Bed, oblige them to indulge themſelves in reſt and ſleep next Morning; and 'tis well if they get to Prayers by Noon; and then, how eaſily are they diverted? Or with what Sloth and Indevotion are they perform'd? And all this while, they ſay, Where is the Sin? Is it a Sin to play at Cards? Is it a

Sin

Sin to be in Company? Is it a Sin to retire late, or to ſleep long when they want it? And if not ſinful; what need of mending it?

Unhappy Chriſtians, to be thus running on to a Precipice, and think themſelves ſafe, becauſe they don't fall every ſtep they take! Is it not by this Way infinite numbers have miſerably periſh'd? And ought not this oblige you to put a ſtop to this unhappy Courſe, where you have Ruin before you? Change but the Caſe from your Souls to your Bodies, and obſerve there how far you are from this Raſhneſs? If you hear but of a River, or a dangerous Way before you, where many have been loſt, upon attempting to paſs, you preſently cry out, *Hold, go back, take another way:* And why ſo, are you drowning, or falling? No, but if we go on, we ſhall come ſoon to this Misfortune; who will venture, where ſo many have periſh'd? And ought there not to be a like Caution in the more important Concern of your Souls, where you have ſo great Danger before you; and, it may be, not only Danger; but if you examine ſtrictly, will likely find your ſelves living in ſuch a ſtate as you cannot reaſonably judge ſafe to Die in? For what is the whole Method of your Lives, but loving

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and ſeeking your ſelves? What is it but indulging Fleſh and Blood; gratifying your own Corruption and Weakneſs; indulging diſorderly and worldly Paſſions? Where is the Love of God? How do you love him with all your Heart, and with all your Strength? How do you ſeek firſt the Kingdom of God, and the things that are above? How do you walk in the Newneſs of Life? Where are you transform'd into Chriſt? Where is his Life manifeſted in yours? Where is the denial of your ſelves? Where is the worthy Fruits of Penance? And yet is not this requir'd of you? Is it not this the whole Goſpel exacts from every Chriſtian? Ask not therefore, Where is your Sin? For if you are not what Chriſtians ſhould be, you cannot poſſibly pretend an exemption from it: There may be great Sins, without great Crimes: To be free from theſe latter, may make a Moral Heathen; but 'tis not enough to make a Good Chriſtian. But this is a Leſſon muſt be taught by Thee, O God; thy powerful Grace muſt prepare Souls to receive it: For a General Corruption has given ſuch Authority to the *Broad Way*, that thy Goſpel is not now a Scandal only to *Jews*, but, I fear, to Chriſtians alſo; who eaſily take offence at ſuch Truths of thine,

thine, which agree not with their Practice, and are like to make them uneasie: Remedy this spreading Evil, I beseech thee; and since Thou hast commanded thy Followers not to conform to this World, but to be reform'd in the Newness of Spirit, awaken their Souls, that they may truly understand it, and give them strength sincerely to practice it.

First Sunday *after* Epiphany, *or within the* Octave.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 2. V. 42. to the end.

DID you not know, I was to be in my Father's Business? These Words are the Answer, Christ made his Parents, when, after three Days search, they found him in the Temple disputing with the Doctors, and contain many good Instructions.

First to Parents, from the Occasion, on which they were spoke, in putting them in Mind, how Sollicitous they ought to be for their Childrens good; and that if they take such Ways, which seem a with-

drawing

drawing from their Duty, they ought to look for them, and continue their search with an untir'd Patience; Perseverance in such Endeavours cannot fail of a Blessing, if not in finding their Children at length in the Temple, at least, in other Rewards of their Charity; whilst all that will be the encrease of their own Crown, which was design'd for their Children: And will be so far satisfactory, as to give them hopes; that if the Childrens Disorders have been occasion'd by their Indiscretion or Neglect, they have, by this Pious Industry, made their best Satisfaction for whatever Injury was done them. No Parents can have Assurance, that their Passions, Ill Example, or Affected Oversights, have not prepar'd their Children for all the Irregularities, to which they are subject: And is it not then reason, they should labour in reclaiming them, if not in Charity to their Children, at least for their own sakes, that so they may satisfie for what is past, and prevent their Childrens Damnation being theirs too?

Secondly, To Children, by informing them, that tho' the Duty to Parents be very great, such as ought not to be transgress'd; yet if the Will of their Parents evidently interferes with the Will of God, they are bound to do rather the Will of God,

God, than of Man; because they being the Children of God, both by Creation, and by Adoption in Baptism, his Right is infinitely above that of Nature, and the Authority of earthly Parents ceases, in concurrence with that of God. Hence it is, that when God calls to the Temple, and to Truth, and the Vice or Errors of Parents opposes their Authority against it, Nature must yield to God; and whatever Difficulties are rais'd by Tenderness or Love, they must be all overcome, in Obedience to his Commands, who will not allow of Nature to put in *Caveats* against his Orders: And if any take Offence from this Proceeding, they must answer for their own Scandal; it being a sufficient justification for Children; that, if they love Father or Mother more than Christ, they cannot be his Disciples. Christ says, he came to separate Father from Son, and Daughter from Mother; Such a Separation therefore ought not to be a surprize, when Justice or Truth obliges to it; and if the World begins to question it, the Childrens Answer must be, *Nesciebatis, quia in his, quæ Patris sunt, oportet nos es? Did you not know, we are to be in our Father's Business?* However, when there is a Necessity for this Division, Children ought to do all, with that Tenderness and Respect, as to

give

give demonstration to their Parents, that they do violence to Nature, and that nothing but their Duty to God, could put them upon this so disagreeable a Method.

A Third to all Christians, in pressing them to an exactness in performing whatever Duties belong to God. For Christ in the Temple three Days after the Festival was ended, is a Reproof of their Coldness and Indifferency, who think all times of Prayer tedious, and therefore, when call'd to the Worship of God, or to Family-Prayer, or other Exercises of Devotion, ever find Business for delay, that so some part may be over, before they appear, and then at the end, are ever upon the start, to take their flight, as if afraid to over-do. Now, tho' it must be own'd, that sometimes there may be hindrance of Business, such as cannot well be dispens'd with; and that to some, it may look like a Matter of Indifferency, to be wanting in things so very inconsiderable, as long as they fail not in any Substantial Duty; yet I dare boldly assert it, and let Experience determine the Truth, that where-ever there are Persons, who are generally slow in going to Prayer; and the First in leaving it, who easily find Business to excuse them from Hearing Instructions, Reading Good Books, and going

ing to the Sacraments, that such Persons I say, are not what they should be, but are wanting in the Substantial Part of a Christian, in not having a Sense or Love of God in their Hearts, and that they are not truly in earnest in the Business of their Salvation.

It is the general Answer of Careless Christians to make their Excuse, in not having Time, thro' the excess and variety of Business; and yet if they are observ'd, I believe, it will be commonly found, they do much less Business than others; that a general Sloth makes them Lazy in all they undertake; that having not time to Pray, they find time for more Sleep, and Idle Conversation, above their Neighbours; that when, 'tis to satisfie their own Humour, or prepare for some Merriment, they know how to contrive and dispatch Business, which always stands in their way, when Eternity calls upon them. And have not they hence reason to suspect themselves, if not conclude, that a Vicious Sloth is their Clog; and because they are not earnest in their Father's Business, they find so many pretexts to excuse them from it?

A Last may be to all in trouble; that if they begin to fear, God is departed from them, they would seek him again with the

the Industry of an untir'd Hopes, without giving over their Search, altho' they seem for a time to have labour'd in vain. 'Tis a usual Trial of his best Servants, to seem wholly to withdraw himself from them; and this, in Pious Souls, cannot fail of raising Fears and Disquiets. But what must they do? They are to moderate these, as well as they can; they are to wait upon God with Patience; they are to seek him in the Temple, and amidst the many Motives to Dejection, learn to hope, with *Abraham*, even against hope. It is in this, Trial is given the best Proof of a Faithful Servant; for tho' in Persecution there are many sharper Trials, yet generally that, which is their Severity, soon puts an end to them; and God seldom fails of supporting those his Servants with interior Comforts, which afford both Strength and Sweetness under their Sufferings; besides, that knowing the Cause, for which they suffer, they have in this the Satisfaction, that it is not the Anger of God, but his Mercy, that by this way calls them to a Crown. But here in this Trial of interior Darkness, the Christian is depriv'd of all Comforts, Prayer gives no Refreshment, the best Exercises of Devotion seem fruitless, his Endeavours for Amendment are barren; God, on whom

he

he desires to depend, seems wholly to have withdrawn himself, so that altho' he seeks he cannot find him; and then suspecting, that all this proceeds from the Anger of God: This altogether, with the long continuance of the Evil, renders his Case very afflicting, and obliges him to make use of all his Patience and Faith, to carry him thro' it. And with these he must go on, with the help of a Good Guide, waiting in the Temple, till God shall please to return, and with new Comforts give relief to his oppress'd Mind.

In these Lessons we see some of those many Infirmities, to which we are subject in this Life, and the necessary dependance we have on God for his directing and supporting Grace. And now, O God, we beseech thee, give proof of thy Mercy, in assisting all concern'd, according to their Necessities. Be a Guide to Parents in their difficult Charge, that either by remisness of Discipline, mistaken Love, or ill Example, they lay not Seeds of Damnation in those, whom they have brought into this World. Give Children a docile Spirit, that by a steddy Submission to their Parents Care, they may be deliver'd from the Snares of the World, of their own Passions and Indiscretion; and let nothing, but the Manifestation of thy

Will, be an Exception to this Duty. Inſpire us all with a Zeal for thy Law, and the diſcharge of all the Obligations of a Chriſtian State; deliver us from Spiritual Coldneſs and Sloth, and from hearkning to their pretended Diſpenſations in our Duty, ſuch as will not be allow'd by thee. Send Comfort to all thoſe, who are under Dejection of Spirit; give them Patience and Courage, that they faint not under their Burthen; but let thy Heavenly Light return again to them, that while they ſeek, they may ſee thy Promiſe accompliſh'd, in finding thee, and bleſs thy Goodneſs for Ever.

Second Sunday *after* Epiphany.

EPISTLE.

Rom. C. 12. V. 6. ends V. 16.

THis Epiſtle is an Abridgment of all Chriſtian Duties; to read it over, and conſider it, is Sermon enough for one Day, and may ſerve for the Meaſure of a Chriſtian Life; happy they, who live up to it; but they cannot be ſo, who take no Care to obſerve it. Let all then be attentive, and examine themſelves, as

they go along, for none can pretend to be unconcern'd; and as often as they desire to know the true ſtate of their Souls, let them come to this Rule.

The Firſt thing requir'd is General; That all Chriſtians would conſider the State, wherein God has placed them; as likewiſe thoſe Gifts and Graces, they have receiv'd, ſo as to be Faithful in the good uſe of them, and Sollicitous to diſcharge well that particular Duty, to which every one is call'd. 'Tis meddling with other Peoples Concerns, and the neglect of our own, is the occaſion of great Miſcarriages and Diſorders; and whoever deſigns ſeriouſly either quiet of Mind, or to be free from diſtracting Thoughts, or to perform well the Obligations of their ſtate, muſt firſt conſider what thoſe Obligations are, then make them their Buſineſs; and having fix'd theſe Bounds, paſs them not, except only when *Neceſſity* or *Charity* diſpences with them: All beyond this is generally nothing but the Effects of Curioſity, or a Buſie Temper, and greatly prejudices that Freedom of Mind, neceſſary for the due performance of all Spiritual and Temporal Duties: For all Diſſipation of Thoughts being the Chriſtian's hindrance, the occaſion of it ought to be cut off, as much as may be, and ever be reſiſted

as a Temptation. Our unavoidable Diſtractions are too many; there's no need of adding to them.

This Advice is by the Apoſtle firſt applied to Paſtors, That they would confine themſelves to their Miniſtry; not charging themſelves with the Adminiſtration of Temporal Affairs, or Secular Employs; but wholly take up their Time and Thoughts, in *Expounding*, *Inſtructing* and *Exhorting*. The Ignorance and Vice of the World make the Practice of theſe Duties indiſpenſible; and they who have undertaken this Charge, and either omit them thro' Sloth, or let other Affairs take place, are not Paſtors, but Idols: *Os habent & non loquuntur.*

Then 'tis applied to all, who have any ſort of Superiority, That they would be Sollicitous in ſatisfying the reſpective Obligations they have taken on them. Here all Magiſtrates, Officers, Parents, Maſters, are concern'd; there being not one of theſe Characters, which brings not a burthen with it, extending their Care beyond themſelves; and if their Sollicitude be not of equal extent with their Obligation, they are wanting in their Duty, are not juſt and faithful Servants, and therefore cannot be Good Chriſtians.

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The Apoſtle then gives direction in particular Duties belonging to all Chriſtians.

1. As to Giving of Alms: *Qui tribuit in ſimplicitate:* Requiring all diſtribution of Charity to be perform'd, not on Humane Reſpects, or for Vanity, but in Singleneſs of Heart, regarding God alone, and the Neceſſity of our Neighbour. Hence thoſe, who have the diſpoſing of any Common Collection, the recommending to Hoſpitals or Funds, or Benefices, *&c.* ought to have this Eſſential Quality, of doing all with Simplicity of Heart, letting thoſe take place, who are beſt qualified, and come neareſt the Deſign of the Giver: For if any *Favour* or *Intereſt* determines the Choice, this is not what is preſcrib'd, but Double-dealing. And as for ſuch, who being in *Truſt* for the Poor, as *Collectors* or *Overſeers*, and either enrich themſelves by their Stock, turning it to their own Advantage by defrauding them; or expend any part of it (beyond what is ſtrictly allow'd) in Treats and Taverns, and ſet the Charge of their Entertainments on the Poor's Score, this muſt be an Abomination before God, and an Injuſtice, againſt which the Cries of the Poor call aloud for Revenge. S. *Paul* adds to this, that all Voluntary Alms and Works of Mercy,

ought to be done with a *Chearful Heart*; *Qui miſeretur in hilaritate.* It ought to be a joy to Chriſtians, that God will accept of them to be the Inſtruments of his Providence, in aſſiſting his Servants and Children; and that by this, they have a Means of exchanging their Temporal Goods for Eternal: 'Tis a double Mercy, to relieve the Diſtreſſed by Alms, and Comfort them in the manner of doing it. All Sharpneſs and Harſhneſs to the Poor, is in this condemn'd; they are to be help'd with Cheerfulneſs; and when refus'd, it muſt be done with Sweetneſs: They give an Alms, who Compaſſionate them, if they cannot otherwiſe Aſſiſt them.

2. He requires, that all Chriſtians, in their Friendſhip and Love to one another, be Sincere, without Diſſembling, Flattery, or Deſign of Intereſt: That they regard one another, as having God for their Father, and being all Members of Jeſus Chriſt.

3. That they have a Horror of all that is Evil, and a Love for all Good: For how can they be faithful Servants of Chriſt, if they eſpouſe not his Intereſt, or abandon him to gratifie themſelves?

4. That they have Charity for every Neighbour, and a Tenderneſs truly Fraternal; this ought to be Holy, as being a Branch

Branch of the Love of God, and therefore not to be corrupted with unbecoming and ſenſual Familiarities: It ought to be Humble, and therefore ever watchful to prevent others in the common Teſtimonies of Deference and Honour.

5. That they be Vigilant in every Duty, and Fervent in Spirit; becauſe they ſerve God in whatever they do; they ſerve him, whoſe Eye is ever upon them; and Sloth or Neglect can never prevail, but they muſt be wanting to Juſtice or Charity.

6. That they have always Comfort in the Hope of Eternal Life: And therefore a Chriſtian's principal Satisfaction ought not to be in the agreeable ſweetneſs of Friendſhip, nor in the Enjoyments or Goods of this Life, but in the Hopes and Expectation of the Goods to come: And the Comfort grounded on this Hope, is not to be loſt in the midſt of Tribulation and Diſtreſs: *In tribulatione Patientes*; the proſpect of Eternity, muſt take off from the weight of theſe momentary Evils, and be the ſupport of a Soul, till its deliverance comes.

7. They muſt be Fervent in Prayer: *Orationi inſtantes*: Becauſe 'tis by this Holy Exerciſe they are to obtain of God what they want: One would think the Neceſſi-

ty of our Condition, the Uncertainty of our State; our Circumſtances of having an Eternity before us, without any poſſibility of returning, if once we miſs our Way &c. ſhould oblige us to Attention, Conſtancy and Fervour in our Prayers, for the obtaining help of him, by whoſe Grace and Power alone, we can be ſecure againſt the Dangers of our State. But here's the ſubject of our Miſery and Confuſion: We know our own Weakneſs and infinite Neceſſities, and yet are ſo ſtupid, as not to ask for help, let every trifling Phancy take off our Thoughts from this ſo great Concern; and too often, by our Irreverence and Indevotion, ſhut his Hands againſt us, of whom we pretend to ask for Relief. 'Tis an afflicting Thought to conſider, how many Provocations are given to God at the very Altar, the very place of Mercy; and to reflect on the great Indecencies in the Congregation in time of Publick Worſhip, is enough to believe, that great numbers, who come there, leave their Reaſon and Faith behind them: For who can imagine, that has either, that ſenſual Gazing, idle Tattling, and deſign'd Vanities, are becoming Entertainments of Souls in their Addreſſes to God? Or can theſe expect Bleſſings, who in their way of ſeeking them, exaſperate him, who is

to

to be the Giver? These go to the place of Prayer, but certainly without a Sense of their Necessities, or of their Dependance on God; and being so far from what the Apostle requires, are in danger of carrying back Curses instead of Blessings; and where then shall these find Pardon, who thus, before the Mercy-seat, encrease the number of their Sins? Fervent Prayer is the exercise of Christians; but where is the Christianity in the practice of this Intolerable Insolence?

8. They are to relieve the Necessities of God's Servants, and practice Hospitality: How does this agree with expensive Entertainments? If spending Money to feed our Vices, support our Liberties, and satisfie the disorder'd Inclinations of our Curiosity, Vanity, Ambition, and Sensual Appetites, had been commanded, I see how faithful Christians would have been in observing it. But when these Corrupt Ways devour now what is commanded to be given to the Necessitous and Strangers, it may be easily imagin'd, what Accounts these will make up, who practice it? Let them have a care they be not cast out with Thieves and Murtherers; their Profession and Sin being much the same.

9. They are to Bleſs thoſe that Perſecute them: Animoſities, Malice, Hatred, Imprecations, and Ill-wiſhes, are to be renounc'd by the Followers of Jeſus, who Died Praying for his Perſecutors: And yet how much is there of this Corruption amongſt thoſe, who ſay, they follow him?

10. They are to partake in the Comforts and Afflictions of their Neighbours, be united in the ſame Sentiments; not ſeek what is eſteem'd Great in this World, but accommodate themſelves to what is reputed Mean and Humble.

Theſe are ſome Principal Duties recommended by *S. Paul* to all Chriſtians; and yet, O God, in how very few are they found? All have the Name, but few the Practice of what they undertake. It ought to be the Subject then of this Days Exerciſe, to examine our ſelves by this Holy Rule, and truly reſolve to uſe our beſt Endeavours in order to our conforming to it. 'Tis ſomething to Read and Think, but without Doing more, our Work will only be Thought of, but never Done.

Second Sunday *after* Epiphany.

GOSPEL,

Joh. C. 2. V. 1. ends V. 11.

Jesus was invited to the Marriage, and his Disciples. Christ was present at this Marriage-Feast, to Honour and Sanctifie this State of Life, and to inform the Faithful, that they ought not to engage in it, without inviting him to the Marriage; that is, that they ought not to undertake and proceed in it, on Motives purely Humane, Temporal, and Carnal, because this is to forbid him being present, instead of inviting him to it; but that they are to consult him in the Choice they make, consider principally those Circumstances, which may render them capable of living in his Service, and observe all those Conditions which the Church prescribes. It is by this purity of Intention Christ is invited to the Marriage; and without this, it cannot be expected, that he should give the Benediction of his Grace, nor concur in remedying those Inconveniencies, which almost unavoidably happen

happen in this State, as he did this here mention'd, in the want of Wine.

It is too much to expect, that Married Persons should live exempt from Dislikes, Contentions or Jealousies; and many Difficulties cannot fail of giving them disturbance, either from difference of Humours, from disagreeable Passions, from Indiscretions, or the following such Ways, as are unwarrantable and destructive of the common Interest: And what is there to be depended on, but only that Grace, which Jesus Christ gives to those, who call him to the Marriage? It is this alone can prevent these Inconveniencies from growing to an Excess, or give them Strength to go thro' them with the Patience and Courage of Christians. And how can they hope for this, who binding themselves in an Engagement of this Concern, without ever consulting him, and Marrying without his Orders, do in effect declare, that they believe themselves in no want of his Assistance, for satisfying the Obligations, and bearing the Difficulties of their State? It must be nothing less, than an extraordinary Mercy, if he leaves them not to themselves, and their Passions, and to all those Inconveniencies, which are so frequent in a Married Life, and permits not, in his Justice, that what they, with so much

much earneſtneſs, ſought, for their Temporal Advantage, may prove their Puniſhment, and even Hell in this World, and be the Way to another that is Eternal.

But the Inſtruction of Jeſus at this Marriage Feaſt reaches beyond this State, and informs Chriſtians, that tho' the Profeſſion of Virginity, and a Religious Life, has many Advantages in it, ſuch as prepare the Undertakers for the more frequent Preſence, and ſtricter Union with Chriſt; yet there is no lawful State, or Buſineſs of Life, even of Perſons engag'd in the World, in which Chriſt will not be preſent, and give his Benediction to it, if thoſe concern'd are but Sollicitous to invite him to it. We have an Encouragement for this Practical Belief, from the many Inſtances ſet down in Holy Writ, of Perſons, who have found Chriſt, and had both the Comfort and Bleſſing of his Sacred Preſence. *Peter*, with ſome others of the Apoſtles, found him, whilſt engag'd in their Trade of Fiſhing; *Zacheus* found him on the Road; the *Samaritan* Woman at the Well, when ſhe was fetching Water for her Family; the Blind Man, when he was Begging; the Sick Man, near the Pond-ſide taking Care for his Health; *Magdalen* at an Entertainment; the Lame Man in the Temple,

and those mention'd in this Gospel, at their Marriage.

And what were all these Occurrences? Not the Effect of Chance, but the Appointments of Providence, for the Comfort of Christians in all Conditions, that they might not disquiet themselves under any Circumstances, as if they were not in a way of finding Christ, or working out their Salvation; but to be their Assurance, that if the hurry of Necessary Business gives little Opportunity for Prayer or Recollection, yet they may find Christ present with them, even in their Business, if they will be but Sollicitous to invite him; the Tradesman may find him in his Shop, the Labourer at his Work, the Plowman in the Field, the Porter in the Streets, the Traveller on the Road, the Servant in the Kitchen, at the Wash-bole or Spit, those that are Sick by their Bed-side, and the Afflicted in all their Distress.

All this depends only on good Management, and it being so much the Christian's Interest to learn it, especially of those, who are oblig'd to labour, I wish they would take S. *Francis Sales* for their Master, who in his *Introduction, Part* 3*d. C.* 35. teaches this Lesson so well, that the best Advice I can give them, is to read it every Week, that so they may become

perfect

perfect in it, and make this Advantage of all their Labours, as not only to work for Bread, but also for a better Recompence, which is Life Everlasting.

The Method of practising it, must be in making an Offering of every thing they do to God. He that has so expressly declar'd the Acceptance of the Widow's Mite, and the Value of a Cup of Cold Water given in his Name, has in this put it beyond all doubt, that there is nothing in it self so inconsiderable, but, if undertaken and perform'd in his Name, will be accepted by him, in order to the obtaining from him an Eternal Recompence. And if every thing, even the ordinary Actions of Humane Life, as of Eating and Drinking, according to *S. Paul*'s Advice, may be thus Consecrated to God, and have a part in the Purchase; with much more reason, may the Labours of those, that work daily for Bread, be brought under this Head. For however streightness of Fortune may render them necessary; yet they may be undertaken, First, As a Charity due to themselves or Family; Secondly, As an Act of Justice, to satisfie the Obligation they have of providing for those under their Care: And these being Duties enjoin'd them by God himself, they may the more easily be begun in his Name;

Name, and be offer'd to him, as a Sacrifice of Obedience to his Commands. And if they take all poſſible Care to be Faithful in them, this Fidelity muſt have place amongſt Chriſtian Virtues, and is one of thoſe, to which Chriſt has promis'd a Reward; for he, that ſhall be Faithful in ſmall Matters, ſhall be ſet over greater.

And ſince all Services, and laborious Employments, have ſomething difficult in them, whether it be in the labour it ſelf, or in the Circumſtances of giving Attendance to it, as in early riſing, or ſetting up late, or in tedious waiting, or in denying Nature many Satisfactions, to which it is inclin'd, and others take; or in ſerving nice and diſagreeable Humours, or in undeſerv'd Reproofs, or in being ſubject to Impertinencies, or in croſs Accidents, *&c.* there is not one of theſe, which may not be embrac'd, in compliance with the Will of God, be made the Exerciſe of daily Patience and Humility, and be accepted, as a Penance of their Sins due from the Juſtice of God.

Now if Chriſtians would learn this Leſſon, is it not plain, that in doing only that, to which they are otherwiſe oblig'd, they would make their Lives the Exerciſe of the greateſt Virtues, of Charity, Juſtice, Patience, Humility and Penance?

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And who can doubt, but that Christ would be then with them, to give a Bleſſing to their Labours, and make them a Sacrifice acceptable to God? Thus certainly it might be: And is it not a Matter of Pity, that this Leſſon is not more univerſally practis'd amongſt Servants, and Labouring Chriſtians; who live generally ſo little concern'd for their greateſt Intereſt, that working hard all the Year for Poor Wages, they offer nothing of what they do, to him, who has promis'd to be more Bountiful in his Rewards; and that having receiv'd their Wages, they have all they can expect? This is very ill Huſbandry, ſuch as we have all too much reaſon to lament in our ſelves; and we cannot do better this Day, than beg a Remedy for it. Help us therefore, O God, and teach us to be Wiſe; that having ſo many Opportunities every Day, of making Offerings to thee, both of what we do, and what we ſuffer, we may improve the Occaſions, for our Eternal Advantage: 'Tis a wonder of thy Goodneſs, that thou wilt accept any thing from ſuch unworthy Offerers; but our Sloth and Indifferency is a greater wonder, that thou being ever ready to accept, we are generally ſo very unmindful of making our Offerings to thee, when all the Advantage too is to be

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our own. What can we then do, but bewail our Blindness, and beseech thee, O Jesus, to be ever with us in all we do, that all our Actions and Sufferings being sanctified by thy Presence, we may learn to turn all to the Honour of our God, and the Salvation of our Souls?

Third Sunday *after* Epiphany.

EPISTLE,

Rom. C. 12. V. 16. ends V. 21.

THis is a Continuation of the fore-going *Epistle*, and the Subject of it are other Duties, which ought to be the Practice of every Christian.

The First is a Recommendation of inferior Humility: That the Christian be careful, not to be Wise in his own Opinion: *Nolite esse prudentes apud vosmetipsos.* Men are very different in their Capacities and Abilities; and yet 'tis permitted to none to glory in the Advantage they have above their Neighbours, since whatever it be, it is the Gift of God, and belongs to him; and is ever under a perpetual Necessity of being directed and applied by his Light and Grace, for the discerning the Truth.

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it is often in need of being improv'd and enlarg'd on many occasions; and otherwise all Humane Light will prove a Principle of Error, and by avoiding one Inconvenience, will lead into another. We are therefore all in a total dependance on God; our confidence must be in the Conduct of his Wisdom, and not our own; without this we cannot possibly avoid going out of the way: Wherefore, instead of esteeming our selves Wise, we are rather to consider our selves as Blind, and as having no other Means of going right, but by demanding and following the Direction of God. Hence all those ought to be very jealous of themselves, who on the Confidence of their Abilities and Knowledge, undertaking to be their own Expositors in Mysteries of Faith, and their own Directors in the Difficulties of Conscience, withdraw themselves from that Authority and Help, which God has appointed to secure them against all the Mistakes of their own Thoughts. For it being the Effect of God's Goodness, who knows the weakness of Man, to appoint him Guides for his Direction; it can be only the Effect of Man's weakness, either to distrust or think such Guides unnecessary, upon the Confidence of his own Light. This weakness in some is Obstinacy, in others Passion

and

and Diſcontent, in others immoderate Fears and Scrupulosity, in others a Reſerv'd Temper: But whatever it be, 'tis always unhappy, depriving a Chriſtian of that better Light, which Heaven has ordain'd for him; 'tis always the Fruit of open, or ſome hidden Pride, which puts him upon dangerous By-ways, when there's a plain Road before him. For when God has commanded us to Captivate our Will, in Obedience to his Law, by Self-denials, and our Underſtanding to his Truths, by Faith; this ſhews our Weakneſs; and that to be a true Chriſtian one muſt be truly Humble; and there can be no ſafer way, than to follow the ſame Method in all the Difficulties of Humane Life; it being moſt ſuitable to the Divine Providence, and moſt comfortable to us in all our Infirmities and Darkneſs; and nothing can ſo eaſily draw upon us the Effects of our own Folly and Indiſcretion, as to be Wiſe in our own Conceits.

The Second is a Duty of Charity, *Not to return Evil for Evil:* And whoever obſerves it not, does himſelf a much greater Injury, than what he reſents as done him by his Neighbour. The Evil receiv'd can be only ſome Temporal Inconvenience; but Evil return'd, is the Evil of Sin; which to a True Chriſtian is the only

Evil

Evil he knows: And therefore it muſt be ever unreaſonable for him to bring this Miſchief on himſelf. This Duty the Apoſtle repeats again in other terms, forbidding Chriſtians to revenge their own Cauſe; and he gives the Reaſon, Becauſe God has reſerv'd all Vengeance to himſelf: He then that receives an Injury with patience, puts his Cauſe in God's Hands, and certainly gains him on his ſide: But he that undertakes to revenge his own Quarrel, is an unjuſt Uſurper of a Power, that belongs not to him, and in this makes God his Enemy; ſo that inſtead of one, he complain'd of, by his own ill Management, he has now two.

Wherefore the Apoſtle preſſes the ſame in a Third Duty, requiring Chriſtians to preſerve Peace, as far as in them lies, with all. Here's a Condition put; becauſe there are ſome ſo perverſe, as to hate Juſtice and Truth, and will take offence from thoſe, who eſpouſe their Cauſe; which however is not to be abandon'd on the apprehenſion of their diſpleaſure: In this Caſe Peace is often broken, and Good Chriſtians are engag'd in it, tho' not in the guilt, ſince, bating the Exceſſes of indiſcreet Zeal, there can be no tranſgreſſion in being Advocates for Juſtice or Truth. But then Care is to be

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us'd not to cover all the Effects of unreasonable Passion with this Plea; for since none Quarrel, but with the presumption of Justice on their side, they may hence think to justifie all their heats: But *S. Paul* removes the ground of this pretext, by informing us, that peaceable Methods are the most effectual for defending the Cause of Virtue; and that there's no need of breaking Charity to maintain Truth. All Men cannot be of the same judgment at all times; Temper and Constitution lay the ground of Difference; Education, Custom, Interest, Favour or Self-love, put a great byass on the Inclination, and this on the Apprehension and Reason; hence *Right* and *Truth* being very differently conceiv'd, their Cause is espous'd by all Parties, and all go different ways: And since whatever favours one side is prejudicial to the other, hence Dislikes creep in, these grow up to Animosities, the Parties begin to regard one another as Adversaries, and then the Passions being excited, these draw in the Reason to their support, all is fill'd with Quarrels and Heats, and Christian Peace is at length quite broken.

Wherefore *S. Paul*, supposing it will be the Case of every Christian to come into these Circumstances, does not allow him to

to meet Heat with Heat, or encounter Paſſion with Paſſion; but rather requires him to yield, if the Controverſie be of things indifferent; and if it be a *Right* that is to be aſſerted, to do it with the Arms of the Goſpel, with Humility, Patience, and Sweetneſs; This being the only way allow'd to Private Perſons of gaining Victory, and triumphing over Adverſaries. In this Poſture they are beſt able to manifeſt the Right they have, ſince being free from Paſſion, they are more compos'd, and have a great Advantage in the liberty of their own Thoughts: They are out of danger of exaſperating their Enemy by fierce and provoking Replies, and may likely calm and ſweeten him by their Moderation and Temper; for tho' violent Oppoſition ſeldom makes Men juſt and reaſonable, yet mildneſs often does it: And if they prevail not, they have at leaſt the Satisfaction of the Humility and Patience they have practis'd, which may ballance, if not wholly take off, the trouble of the Injury receiv'd: For 'tis no ſmall Comfort, to enjoy an undiſturb'd Peace and Tranquillity of Mind, without which they cannot poſſeſs God, or their own Souls. Chriſtian Prudence therefore, without any other Motives, is enough to oblige us to proceed

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with Patience under all Provocations, and to convince us, that Choler, Oppoſition and Revenge, are treacherous Succours, which inſtead of relieving, always help to encreaſe our Evils.

And now having theſe Preſcriptions of Moderation and Peace left us in Holy Writ; nay, it being there commanded us, to return good for evil, to feed, clothe and aſſiſt our greateſt Enemies, and thus overcome evil with good, is it not very ſtrange, to ſee ſo very little of this practis'd, but that Contentions, Anger, Impatience, and Revenge, are the common Methods of the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, that every little Trifle puts them upon theſe, whereas 'tis their Duty to bear all Extremities, without the breach of Charity or Peace? May we not therefore juſtly fear Good Chriſtians to be very few, ſince without conſidering the manifold Tranſgreſſions againſt other Precepts, the Offences againſt this one Duty, excludes ſuch vaſt numbers from all ſolid Right to this Title of being the Children of God, and True Followers of their Maſter? Remedy this Evil, we beſeech thee, O God; and ſince thou haſt appointed Charity to be the Character of thy Diſciples, grant that all, who make Profeſſion of being ſo, may faithfully practice what Thou haſt com-

commanded, and in this distinguish themselves from all others.

Third Sunday *after* Epiphany.

GOSPEL,
Mat. C. 8. V. 1. ends V. 13.

LORD, *my Servant lies Sick of a Palsey in my House, and is very much tormented.* They are the Words of the Centurion, making his Petition to Christ in behalf of his Sick Servant. His great Solicitude for him, is first, an Instruction to all Heads of Families, of the Care they ought to have of their Servants, in time of Sickness; not then to turn them out of Doors, when they stand most in need of help; but to consider them, as a Part of their Family, nay, even as their Children; for so the Centurion does, who in his Address to Christ, calls his Servant his Child, *Puer meus jacet in domo Paralyticus*; and to give them that Assistance, as is in Charity due upon these Titles. Tho' there seems something of Equity too; for if Servants give their Health to their Masters, does not Justice require some Care to be taken of them, when they are Sick,

for recovering that, which is lost in their Service? If Christian Justice or Charity reaches it not, at least Compassion ought; for otherwise, that will be denied to Servants, which is a common Privilege of Horses and Dogs.

This Duty presses with greater force in regard of their Souls; so that if Servants are either Careless in their Christian Duties, or subject to any kind of sinful Disorder, by which they offend God, and give ill Example to their Neighbour. Those, in whose Care they are, must use all possible Endeavours, in order to reclaim and bring them to a better Disposition of Spiritual Health: Because they have the Charge of them, and are bound to consider all their Ways; and S. *Paul* lets them know in plain terms, what their Charge is, 1 *Tim.* 5. 8. *He that has not a Care of those, that belong to him, and principally those of his Family, has denied his Faith, and is worse than a Heathen.* From which Principle we may make some Judgment of the Heads of Families, and see the different degrees, in which they transgress their Duty.

The First is of those, who wholly neglect their Servants, so that, tho' they see them subject to great Disorders and Prophaneness, pass all by without any Con-

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cern, as if they were no part of their Care.

The Second is of those, who observe little or no Discipline in their Families, but for want of good Order, give their Servants frequent Opportunities of taking their own Ways, both in idle Conversation, and ill Company; and thus leaving them too often to the Conduct of their own Indiscretion, become the Occasion of their Ruin, both as to Body and Soul. How often is it, that hence Good Parents, having placed their Children out for learning a Trade, find them, after a few Months or Years, Corrupted beyond Recovery? And upon whom must this Miscarriage be charg'd: The Servants are not to be excus'd, because they ought to be more careful of themselves: But it will certainly fall with a heavy weight on the Masters, who knowing the Hazards of their unexperienc'd Years, took not due Care to prevent them, by obliging them to be subject to better Order, than that of governing themselves. Whence Masters may observe, that, to satisfie their Duty, they must not only see, that Servants be diligent in their Hours of Business, but how they spend their leisure time, what Company and Hours they keep, what are their Expences, how they employ *Sundays*

and *Holidays*, with many other Particulars, which are neceſſary for preventing the many Miſchiefs, to which they are otherwiſe expos'd.

The Third is of thoſe, who are not Sollicitous, that their Servants be duly inſtructed, or that they be exact in their Duties of Prayer, Reading, and going to the Sacraments. Thoſe, who obſerve, how great Ignorance there is in this Rank of Chriſtians; how many are the Miſchiefs of their Ignorance and Sloth; how eaſily they find pretexts for excuſing them in all that regards their Soul, will ſoon diſcover, what the Obligation is of thoſe, under whoſe Care they are; and that if theſe are not Watchful in enquiring into their Ways, Charitable in admoniſhing, and Earneſt in ſpurring them on, they muſt neceſſarily draw upon their own Souls the guilt of their Servants neglects.

The Fourth is of thoſe, whoſe Worldly and Sollicitous Spirit, will not allow their Servants to ſpare time for their Prayers, or other like Duties; but think all that time loſt, which is not ſpent in their Buſineſs.

The Laſt is of thoſe, whoſe difficult Temper, not capable of being pleas'd, is following Servants ſo cloſely with Expoſtulations and Reproofs, that they keep them

them always uneaſie, and never permit their Minds to calm ſo much, as to be capable of enjoying any inward Peace, or performing any Duty towards God. Not that ſeaſonable and deſerv'd Reproof is to be condemn'd; but that ſome Conſideration is to be had of Servants, ſo that while Diligence is expected from them, they be not however perſecuted upon every trifling Exception, ſuggeſted by a reſtleſs and peeviſh Humour; for that this robs them of all Comfort, and indiſpoſes them for thoſe Duties, which cannot be ſatisfied amidſt ſuch Confuſion.

In theſe particular ways, beſides that of ill Example, and others, many are wanting in that Duty, which belongs to ſuch as are under their Charge, and may find at the laſt Day, a large Account brought in againſt them, from the pernicious Conſequences of this Neglect. But now while Charity and Juſtice oblige Maſters to a great Care in regard of their Servants; the ſame Virtues bring a great Obligation likewiſe upon Servants, as to the Care they ought to have of their Maſters.

Firſt, In the Point of Reſpect, in puting a reſtraint upon their Words, ſo as, whether in the Caſe of Juſt or Unjuſt Reproof, to ſay nothing unbecoming their Condition; nor, upon any Provocation,

to let Paſſion put them upon diſreſpectful Expreſſions. By moderate Anſwers they muſt endeavour to remove Miſtakes; and where theſe are not admitted, they muſt leave the reſt to Time and Providence to do them right. This ſame Reſtraint muſt tye their Lips alſo behind their Maſters Backs, ſo as to ſuppreſs all manner of undecent Complaints and Murmurings, ſuch eſpecially, as are a leſſ'ning to thoſe, whom they ſerve: And this Silence ought to be more ſtrictly obſerv'd, in never publiſhing to Strangers the Secrets of the Families, in which they are; for this is a kind of Treachery: And if their Maſters come to ſuffer in Reputation, by their Goſſiping, Indiſcretion, or Malice, they muſt anſwer it both to God and Man.

Secondly, In the Point of Fidelity, ſo as not to let their Maſters ſuffer any prejudice in their Goods, by their Neglect, or Prodigality, or for making any Advantage to themſelves. Hence Juſtice obliges them to be as careful of whatever is under their Charge, as if it were their own; and likewiſe to make ſatisfaction for whatever Loſs happens to their Maſter, thro' their Sloth, or affected Careleſneſs. It obliges them likewiſe to manage all with their greateſt Induſtry for his Advantage, and to diſpoſe of nothing, that is his, but by his

his Order or Permiſſion. And therefore, as to all, they otherwiſe give away, or ſpend in treating Companions or Friends, it muſt be conſider'd as nothing leſs than Theft, and 'tis their Duty to ſatisfie for what they have miſ-ſpent. It obliges them again to avoid all manner of Contracts, in which their own Intereſt is advanc'd by their Maſter's Loſs: There are variety of theſe amongſt ſuch as have the managing or paying of Money, and Practice pleads ſtrongly for them; but ſince they generally entrench upon Juſtice, theſe cannot be allow'd in any, who think of being call'd to an Account for all they do.

Thirdly, In the Point of Diligence, ſo that they faithfully perform whatever Service they undertake; not only, when they have the Maſter's Eye to overlook them, but even, when they are without a Witneſs, and preſume upon never being queſtion'd for what they do. This it is they undertake, and they are as much oblig'd to ſatisfie it, as if every Particular were expreſs'd in a Formal Contract. The Obligation therefore is of ſtrict Juſtice, and it ought to preſs with ſo much weight upon the Conſcience of every one in Service, that I cannot but fear, thoſe, who are wanting in it, either thro' Sloth, or by imperfect Endeavours of pleaſing the Eye,

are wanting in the most substantial Principles of Justice and Faith, and cannot be Good Christians, if they are not Diligent Servants.

These are the Principal Points, which ought to be the Concern both of Masters and Servants; and neither can have true Peace of Conscience, but by examining themselves on these Particulars, and being careful in the exact discharge of them; because that Justice, we owe to God and our Neighbour, obliges all the Professors of Christianity, not only to satisfie their General Duties, which are common to all, but those likewise, which belong to every Particular State; for thus are we taught both by Nature and Reason, both by Scripture and Faith. Since therefore thou art pleas'd, O God, by thy Gospel, thus to put us in mind of our Duties, give us Grace likewise, that we may be Faithful in them; we are too easie in deceiving our selves, in doing our Duty by halves; teach us to be more sincere, and deliver us from all Delusion, that having receiv'd our Charge from thee, we may be prepar'd to render a just Account.

Fourth Sunday *after* Epiphany.

EPISTLE,
Rom. C. 13. V. 8. ends V. 10.

HE *that loves his Neighbour, has fulfill'd the Law.* Eternal Happineſs depending on the fulfilling the Law of God, 'tis no ſmall Comfort to find the whole extent of a Chriſtian's Duty, abridg'd into the narrow Compaſs of one ſingle Point, by which every one is made capable, without diſtraction or confuſion, of examining into the ſtate of his Soul, and diſcovering how far he ſtands for the obtaining that Inheritance to which he pretends. And as for the Negative part, there needs no examining at all; for if *Loving our Neighbour* be fulfilling the Law, 'tis demonſtration, that whoever is out of Charity with any Neighbour, fulfils it not, and conſequently living in Diſobedience to God, muſt look on his Title to that Inheritance to be very weak, if not wholly void, which is promis'd and ſettled, not on Rebels, but on Faithful and Obedient Children. For Heaven is not to be obtain'd, but on thoſe very Terms and Conditions,

which he has appointed, who is Sole Proprietor and Master of it: And since this here mention'd, is what he indispensibly requires, a breach of it must be a Forfeiture of all Right and Claim.

But now to give a like Satisfaction to the Affirmative part, is more difficult: For tho' it be indisputable, that whoever loves his Neighbour, fulfils the Law; yet 'tis not so very easie to determine, who it is, that loves his Neighbour, as here requir'd; it being a Matter subject to variety of Mistakes. And, first 'tis evident, *Common Civility* is not the practice of this Love, nor a sufficient proof of a Heart being possess'd with it: For this is too often grounded on respects purely Humane; as in Persons of Quality, who are exact in all its Niceties, to shew their Education and Politeness: Others of lower Rank are industrious in all its Points, to gain something of a like Esteem, and add to their Reputation. And in all Conditions, great numbers have no other Motive of being Civil to all, than the fear of that Prejudice, which otherwise they may bring upon themselves, by being wanting in this part of Breeding, in being Despis'd, Ridicul'd and Slighted. Vanity is another Root of Civility in too many, who are pleas'd in the numbers of their Visits, and therefore

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are Civil to all, that in all Accidents of Misfortune or Succels, they may be followed with Crowds to Condole or Congratulate with them: 'Tis the same in others, who by this means have the more frequent opportunity of going to such Acquaintance, where they hope to meet Company, who may admire their Riches, Beauty, or quaintness of Address. Idleness and Custom is another Motive of Civility; many have nothing to do, and therefore by this way, draw Company to pass their Life away with less uneasiness to themselves: And others practice the same, without any other reason, but because 'tis the Fashion. Now in all these, who are thus Obliging and Civil, and have the Repute of the World, 'tis plain, 'tis not the love of their Neighbour, but Self-love, that moves them; since in all they do, they only seek themselves, which cannot possibly be that Branch of Charity, here describ'd to be the Fulness of the Law.

Secondly, 'Tis evident, that *Affability, Sweetness*, or *Common Friendship*, is not *this love of our Neighbour*; because the two former have many times no better Foundation than those above; *Vanity, Interest*, or *Self-love*; and therefore, however they may render Men Complete and Acceptable, yet they cannot make them

Virtuous

Virtuous? 'Tis generally the same as to *Ordinary Friendship*; for tho' there may be such a thing as Holy Friendship, which S. *Francis Sales* commends; yet Ordinary Friendships, are nothing but an Honourable Sort of Traffick, by which Men design to make some Advantage answerable to their different Pretensions or Passions: So that if it be not some Interest that promotes it, 'tis many times a Sensual Affection, which ushers in, under a pretended Innocence, such Mischiefs, that instead of fulfilling the Law, it always weakens, and often ends in the open violation of it.

The Love of our Neighbour then, that is, the Fulfilling of the Law, is nothing of all these; but it is a Branch or Extension of the Love of God, by which a Christian desires for his Neighbour the Soveraign Good, desires God to his Neighbour, and his Neighbour to God. This Love begins in God, and from him flows upon all that bear his Image, that are Created by him, for the Enjoyment of Eternal Happiness, and are Redeem'd by him, for the obtaining that Possession of Bliss. This Love is the Accomplishment of the Law; for tho' it requires not any express reflection of Thought, or sensible Affection, by which the Heart is carried with Inclination

nation towards every one; yet it absolutely requires a certain Motion of the Will, by which it is inclin'd to desire and procure the good of every Neighbour, and is averse from every thing that may do him harm: And thus it fulfils the Law; for he that thus truly loves his Neighbour, cannot injure him, neither in his Goods, nor in his Reputation, nor in his Life, nor do him any sort of Injustice. Hence 'tis plain the Love S. *Paul* speaks of, is not a barren and unactive Love; but such as is ever in readiness to follow the Commands of God; such as puts a restraint on the Will, in regard of whatever is forbid, and pushes it forward, to discharge all the Duties of Justice and Charity.

'Tis a Love always inclining to give Relief to every Neighbour, considering the Person of Jesus Christ in every one that is in Distress, and that whatever is done to them, is done to him. And tho' this Love has Bounds as to its outward Effects, since one Charity may be inconsistent with another; and Obligation to Family or Children, and oftentimes Sickness or Inability may either greatly limit, or render them wholly impracticable, yet 'tis always careful, that neither Luxury, nor Ambition, nor Vanity, nor Covetousness, nor a Distrust of Providence, set Bounds to the

exercise

exercise of its Charity, either by disabling or shutting its Hands. But as to the Interior Effects, which are never inconsistent, it is ever diligent in the practice of them, having always sincere Desires of assisting those, whom otherwise it cannot help: And therefore it continually prays for every Neighbour, suffers and bears with them: And these, no question, are great Alms in the sight of God, and such as will have the Reward of all those Actions, which their Circumstances made them uncapable of performing.

Secondly, 'Tis a Love which produces a Patience without Bounds, and such as is invincible under the greatest Provocations; forgiving Injuries, not only Seven times, but Seventy times Seven. For there being none so great, which any Neighbour can do us, but what is capable of the Divine Mercy; therefore the Christian, that has Charity, prays that every such Neighbour may find this Mercy: And consequently can never dispence with himself, in not forgiving him; since 'tis impossible, he should heartily pray, that God would pardon him, and he, on his part, refuse the Pardon, which he asks for him of God. And tho' he may be discourag'd with the Apprehension of his Neighbour being profligately wicked,

yet

yet ſince, whatever his Wickedneſs be, he is certainly Miſerable too, 'tis with this Conſideration God will have him look on every Neighbour, ſo to excite his Compaſſion towards him: There being no ſufficient Motive to conclude any irrecoverably wicked, till an impenitent Death has render'd all Amendment impoſſible.

This is the Love, and theſe the Conditions of it, which fulfils the Law: Grant then, O God of Infinite Goodneſs and Love, that in ſeeking this Rich Jewel, we may not be deceiv'd with Counterfeit and Falſe Pretences; that we may never believe we have it, till we are convinc'd by its Effects, in being deſirous and ready to aſſiſt, ſuffer, and pray for every Neighbour, till we find that no Injuries are able to ſhut our Hands or Hearts againſt him: This is the Charity, Bleſſed Redeemer, of which thou haſt given us Example, and 'tis in this alone we can be ſecure.

Fourth

Fourth Sunday *after* Epiphany.

GOSPEL,
Mat. C. 8. V. 23. ends V. 27.

LORD, *ſave us, we periſh.* In theſe words the Apoſtles addreſs'd themſelves to Chriſt in their Diſtreſs, when, he ſleeping in the Ship, they were in danger from the violence of a ſudden Storm. This danger of the Apoſtles affords Matter of Comfort to Chriſtians in the Troubles, that befal them in this Life. For if theſe, having Chriſt in their Company, and undertaking to paſs over the Sea, with his Conſent, and even by his Order, as muſt be here preſum'd, find themſelves ſurpriz'd in a Tempeſt, ſuch as threatens them with Shipwrack; does not this prepare Chriſtians againſt all Surprize, if in ſatisfying their beſt Duties, and turning their Labours, where the manifeſt Will of God ſeems to lead them, they yet meet with Difficulties, and find ſuch Perſecution rais'd againſt them, as not only to threaten a Miſcarriage, but likewiſe to put them upon queſtioning the Juſtice of their Undertaking?

This

This then is the Inſtruction of the preſent Storm: Chriſtians, like the Apoſtles, are to engage in nothing, but by the Orders of Chriſt; that is, are ever to be under the Conduct of Juſtice and Duty. Being thus embark'd, they are not to think themſelves priviledg'd from Tempeſts and Danger, but hoping and praying for a proſperous Gale, they are to be ſtill prepar'd for Storms; becauſe they ſee, what the Method of Providence is; that God does not raiſe the fury of the Waves againſt a *Jonas* only, who Sails contrary to his Orders; but likewiſe, when Jeſus is in the Ship, the Apoſtles at the Helm, and they Steering by his Commiſſion. This has been ſo frequently the Conduct of God, that all Surprize here muſt be Charg'd upon want of Obſervation. Was not *Abraham* call'd by God himſelf out of his Country, and the Land pointed out to him by the Finger of God, into which he was to go? When, behold, a Famine meets him, he cannot ſubſiſt where Providence has directed; but he is oblig'd to ſeek relief by a new Pilgrimage. *Moſes* is by Name Summon'd from Heaven, to go and deliver the *Iſraelites* from their Captivity; he undertakes it in the very Way appointed him by God; and what is the immediate Effect? The People, he attempted

tempted to relieve, are oppress'd with greater Burthens, the Court of *Pharaoh* is exasperated by his Embassy, and the *Israelites* reproach him for having put a Sword into their Enemies Hand to Kill them. The Children of *Israel* make a just War upon *Benjamin*, (*Judg.* c. 20.) they assemble before the House of God, have a General of God's Appointment, and his express Orders for engaging in Battel; twice they consult him, and by him are encourag'd to Fight, and yet are twice Overthrown with a great Slaughter. And did not the Apostles afterwards, in the New Law, undertake the Preaching of the Gospel, by the positive Commands of Christ; and how many Persecutions were rais'd against them? What a universal Opposition did they find? And did not the World seem to triumph over them, whilst they all fell in the Attempt, and were made a Sacrifice to Malice and Error?

If this then be the Conduct of God, what must Christians do? Must not they go on ever resolutely in their Duty, and not be discourag'd with whatever Difficulties thwart them in their way. If in satisfying the Obligations of Justice, if in doing Charities, if in following Christ, and being faithful to Truth, they not only meet

meet with Oppoſition, but often find themſelves drawn into moſt perplexing Circumſtances, are not they quietly to ſubmit to theſe Appointments of Providence, and be contented, if God calls them to exerciſe their Patience with their other Pious Deſigns? What is this, but to raiſe the Value of what they do, and by interrupting the Peace of their Undertakings, to defer their Satisfactions to a better World? What is it, but to recall them to the knowledge of themſelves, to make them more ſenſible of Humane Weakneſs, and oblige them to a greater dependance on God? Should theſe Contradictions then cauſe dejection in Chriſtians, and caſt a damp on their Spirits, as if carrying with them the Diſpleaſure of God, and being Arguments of his diſapproving their Undertakings? This cannot be altogether prevented; it may be, in their firſt Surprize, and Melancholy, improv'd by a ſubtle Enemy, may be too forward in encreaſing the Confuſion; but it muſt be their Endeavour to withſtand this Impoſture, by compoſing their diſorder'd Thoughts, and peaceably leaving God to the Secrets of his own Conduct; remembring, that as it was his Will, they ſhould undertake what Charity or Juſtice inſpir'd; ſo it is his Will, they ſhould

ſuffer

ſuffer the Diſappointments of their Deſigns, and ſubmit to the Troubles, that are the Conſequence of their Attempts; and in ſuch Suffering, may be much more their Advantage, than if Peace, Applauſe and Succeſs had anſwer'd their Wiſhes.

It is under ſuch Troubles, they may make their Petitions to God with greater Confidence, than at other times; ſince God's Infinite Mercy cannot be wanting in their Relief, whoſe Troubles are not the Effects of their Raſhneſs or Vice, but of their Duty; in ſuch Diſtreſs the Apoſtles invok'd their Maſter's help, and ſoon found it in an unexpected Calm, which quieted both the Sea and their Fears. And while Chriſtians ſee, that the Sea and Winds obey his Voice, and in this confeſs, all Creatures to be ſubject to his Power, have not they reaſon to raiſe their Hopes in proportion to this Power, eſpecially where his Goodneſs too is engag'd by their Suffering in his Cauſe, and ſo with Confidence expect, that he will appear in their behalf, either to Command a Calm, or give them Strength to hold out with a Courageous Patience amidſt the Dangers of the Storm.

The Prayer the Apoſtles us'd, muſt be very effectual for this: *Lord, ſave us, we periſh*; ſince nothing can better expreſs

our

our own Miſery, and the abſolute dependance we have on God, Two neceſſary Conditions for obtaining help: And what better Encouragement, than in the ſpeedy Relief, it brought to the Apoſtles, in their Diſtreſs? I wiſh only, it were more frequent amongſt Chriſtians, and that, then eſpecially, when they are not capable of longer Prayer, they would not omit this. They eaſily ſee here the Succeſs of a few words, when coming from a ſincere Heart, and ſenſible of its Wants; and this Succeſs is a ſufficient Condemnation of their Practice, who, upon every Surprize, pronounce this Sacred Name of *Lord*, with many others, with their Lips, but without any Senſe of what they ſay; that is, who take the Name of God in vain. For is it not in vain, when 'tis without Reſpect and Thought? Is it not in vain, when it comes from no farther, than their Lips? Is it not in vain, when that, which is ſo uſeful, and might be ſo much to their Advantage, in drawing down the Bleſſings of Heaven, they ſpeak to no purpoſe, and for no uſe at all, but only as a By-word; that is, the moſt inſignificant of all? They are forward enough in crying out againſt *Waſte* and *Abuſe*, when that, which might be ſerviceable to themſelves or Family, is by neglect

neglect render'd useless, or carelessly thrown away: Here Servants must be condemn'd, and their Reproof is deserv'd. What then must it be, in the frequent abuse of the Sacred Names of God and our Redeemer? Is there no better use of these, than in making useless Exclamations, and letting them be the Burthen of every Ridiculous Surprize and Outcry? This however is no matter of wonder in those, whose disorder'd Lives speak too plainly their Contempt of all that is Holy: But that this should be the practice of such, whose better Principles put them upon taking pains for Heaven, is so great an Absurdity, that it must be set down as just matter of Surprize, that profess'd Piety should tolerate a Custom so disrespectful of God, and of such ill Example to Men. Whilst therefore thou art pleas'd, O God, to offer thy self for the Protector of Christians, and thy Mercy is ever ready to appear in their Relief, who, sensible of their Misery, invoke thy Holy Name, in time of their Distress, teach all in Trouble to seek Help in thee, and let thy Goodness ever answer their Wants, for the Encouragement of their Piety: But, O God, as for those, who abuse thy Name, in prophaning and making that Common, which ought to be most Sacred,

give

give them a Senſe of this Irreverence, that while they every Day pray, that thy Name may be ſanctified, they may not, with the ſame Lips, bring it into Contempt.

Fifth Sunday *after* Epiphany.

EPISTLE,

Coloſ. C. 3. V. 12. ends V. 17.

LET *the Peace of Chriſt rule in your Hearts.* The Peace of Chriſt is that, which the World cannot give. There may be great Satisfaction in the Goods and Enjoyments of this Life, in a plentiful Eſtate, in Children, in Friends, in Honours, in Reputation, *&c.* but nothing of this is the Peace of Chriſt; for all theſe are common to the Heathen and Unbeliever, as well as the Chriſtian; and if the Chriſtian finds Peace in them, 'tis the Peace only of the Natural Man, and not of the Spiritual; 'tis a Peace, which recommends the World to him, and him to the World; but is no Argument of his being a Member of Chriſt, or at peace with God: 'Tis a Peace which the World gives, and the World can take away; ſince upon every

Fright

Fright or Change that happens, that 'tis wholly loſt, and, like the Houſe built on Sand, is overthrown by a Storm; and in this plainly ſhews, on what Foundation it ſtood; not on Chriſt, but the World: And therefore however deſireable it may be to Senſe and Nature, which ever ſeek ſuch deceitful Goods; yet there is no ſuch real Advantage in it, that he is ever the better Chriſtian that has it, or the worſe that has it not. 'Tis true, if we regard the common Judgments of Men, they have no other Rule in pronouncing a Man Happy, but in proportion to theſe Worldly Enjoyments, which he poſſeſſes: And ſo of Courſe, they conclude him Miſerable, who has them not. Thus the World judges; but as this deceives others, ſo likewiſe it is deceiv'd it ſelf: The Goſpel declares its Error, and the Good Chriſtian finds the ſenſible Experience of it; who ſeeking Heaven, feels a diſtraction in all that's Worldly; and that if he cannot in Spirit, ſeparate himſelf from what he poſſeſſes of it, he becomes Miſerable in the very Enjoyment of that, for which he is reputed happy: So that all of this kind is ſo far from bringing him true Peace, that it becomes a danger to him of deſtroying all inward Quiet. He knows what powerful Charms theſe are to Corrupt Nature;

ture; and if they prevail so far, as to gain possession of his Heart, the love of these diminishes the Love of God; their dazling lighe darkens the Light of Heaven; and tho' some superficial Comforts attend this State, yet whenever he reflects with any serious Thought upon himself, he then discovers a real Misery within; he laments his great Disorder, loses all Peace; and nothing but *not thinking* can moderate his Sighs and Tears: And if he ever resolves to recover his Internal quiet; he knows there's no other Expedient, but what the Gospel prescribes, by really, or else in Spirit, renouncing whatever he enjoys: And thus in the midst of Worldly Blessings, courted and admir'd by all, he heartily envies their better State, who living obscur'd and hid from the World, enjoy what's sufficient to support Nature, but have not enough to disquiet or draw their Hearts from God.

The Peace then of Christ, is not the Effect of this kind of Blessings, but consists in a well-order'd Conscience, satisfied in all the Accomplishments of God's Will, and rejoicing in the Hope of Bliss: This is the Peace, the Apostle desires should Reign in every Christian's Heart. He would not have it be only there in Thought, or in an unsettled Way, as the

Effect of some Holy, but passing glance; what he requires, is, That it should be fixt, and like an Absolute Soveraign, command and over-rule all other Affections and Passions of the Mind whatever may appear, and seditiously strive to gain possession of that Post. He would have it so powerful, as to maintain its Right and Ground, in all Disappointments, Troubles, Losses, Afflictions in Life and Death. For in all these the Will of God appearing, however disagreeable they may otherwise be, yet still that Peace, which is built on the fulfilling God's Will, is to stand its ground. For, if a Christian, that daily prays, *Thy Will be done*, only then finds Peace within, when every thing prospers, and goes on smoothly, according to his wish, and upon every Trouble, yields under the disorder of an unquiet Mind; 'tis plain, his Peace was only the Effect of his own Will being done, and not of God's. For since the Will of God is equally in all that happens of this kind, tho' all cannot be alike to Nature, yet 'tis the Christian's Task to embrace all that comes, and still preserve his Peace: For since by Faith he discerns these Truths; That God ordains and governs all; that nothing happens without his Providence; that in whatever comes to pass in the World, he either exercises

erciſes his Juſtice, or his Mercy; that no Creature has any power, but what he gives; that all are either the Inſtruments or Miniſters of his Decrees: In this he diſcovers ſufficient Reaſons to lay the Foundations of a laſting Peace. For he always finds it reaſonable and beſt, that God ſhould govern, and he obey; that God ſhould guide, and he follow; that he ſhould conform himſelf to God's Will, and not deſire, that God ſhould ſubmit to his; for that God's Will being always Juſt, always Holy, it is likewiſe always Adorable, always worthy of his Submiſſion and Love, tho' in its Effects it ſometimes proves uneaſie and troubleſom; and therefore he cannot diſapprove, or find fault with it, without being Unjuſt, becauſe 'tis all what Juſtice it ſelf does. Thus ever diſcerning the Will of God in all that happens, the ſight of his Juſtice and Majeſty checks all his Complaints and Impatience, and never permits him to go farther in the moſt afflicting Difficulties, than with *David* to cry out; *I held my peace, and was humbled, becauſe it was Thou, O Lord, didſt it.*

And 'tis not to be wonder'd, he finds Peace in the Evils of this Life, and the Contradictions of Men, ſince he preſerves the ſame even in his Spiritual Infirmities,

in his Failings and Faults, and in the Contradiction and War of his own Passions and Thoughts. He labours, by a watchful Diligence, to remedy all his Wilful Faults, as well as he can; and humbles himself under all such as are involuntary; he suffers whatever he cannot tell how to remedy; and since 'tis God's Will, he should be in the World in this manner, and with these Conditions, he quietly submits, waiting on the Goodness of God for his perfect Cure, when he shall please to grant it. Thus the Peace of Christ always rules in his Heart, and is ever victorious over all trouble; nothing appearing more certain to him, than to conclude, whenever he is sensible of Trouble, that it is God's Will he should defend himself from it, as being nothing but a Temptation, which hinders the Soul from acting, brings Discouragements, and a kind of Sloth, ever with it, and prevents the well-doing all Duties, that then belong to him; and no pretexts are to be admitted for yielding under it: For Trouble, Anxiety, and Dejection, are always evil; and 'tis a most pressing Obligation at all times to stand against them. So that I here most earnestly recommend it to all, not only in regard of those Disquiets occasion'd by some Affliction; but likewise of those many Op-

Oppreſſions and Dejections, which are the Effect of Conſtitution, and are rather an Indiſpoſition or Diſtemper, than the Conſequence of any real Evil: For theſe being as pernicious to all Chriſtian Duties as the former, muſt with an equal Care be reſiſted, whilſt they deſtroy all inward Peace, which we are bound at all times to preſerve. 'Tis even in theſe too, a Chriſtian ought to conſider the Will of God, and look on them, as Exerciſes he is pleas'd to ſend him, for the trial of his Submiſſion and Patience: And he that accuſtoms himſelf to reſt, and be ſatisfied in the fulfilling God's moſt Holy Will, by degrees will find reſt in theſe too, and be in a way of diminiſhing, if not wholly removing them; ſince a Submiſſion to God has ever the Bleſſing of interior Comfort attending it, and thus the Peace of Chriſt will be preſerv'd. Inſtruct all thy Faithful, O Bleſſed Redeemer, in this Leſſon: Divert them by thy Grace from ſeeking the Peace of this World, and direct them to a better, ſuch a Peace, which they learn from Thee, in thy perfect Submiſſion to thy Father's Will; a Peace, which may make them victorious over all Troubles, and ſecure them againſt all Snares: Teach them to embrace thy Will in all things; this will give Reſt to their Souls; a Reſt,

which will be Consummated at length in Thee.

Fifth Sunday *after* Epiphany.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 13. V. 24. ends V. 30.

LET *both grow till the Harvest.* The Husbandman had sow'd good Seed in his Field; but growing up, it appear'd mix'd with Tares: And the Gospel says, these were sown by the Enemy, whilst they were sleeping, whose Watchfulness should have prevented this Mischief. By which we are inform'd, that the general Occasion of all manner of Disorders, both Publick and Private, is want of Care, by their sleeping, who should be upon the Watch. This is the Root of so many Scandals, that disfigure the Church, of so many Corruptions amongst Religious; they, who are entrusted with the Charge, having their Eyes shut by Sloth, or diverted from their Duty by the Charms of Pleasure, Interest or Ambition, give opportunity to the Devil, of laying those Seeds, which, tho' at first undiscern'd, are not afterwards to be rooted out, but with

with the hazard of the good Corn. This ſame is the Occaſion of ſo much Vice amongſt the Flock; a general Careleſneſs opens a Way to all manner of Corruption; they conſider not their own Weakneſs, are not ſenſible of his Snares, who lyes in wait to deceive; they think not of the Difficulties in a Virtuous Life; hence they take not pains to ſecure themſelves, they examine not into the Nature of Things, are not jealous of being deceiv'd, Sollicite not for Help in proportion to their Wants. And what is the Effect? The baſe Enemy takes the Advantage of this want of Care; he ſows his Tares, and behold how they grow up; profeſs'd Pride and Ambition is their Practice, who are taught Humility by their Goſpel; they, who are commanded to be Poor in Spirit, ſpend their whole Souls in the eager ſearch after Riches; they, who are enjoin'd Moderation in all things, live in the Practice of a general Intemperance and Exceſs; Self-denial is requir'd, and their whole Buſineſs, is to gratifie themſelves; Paſſion and Revenge appear inſtead of Charity and Meekneſs, Over-reaching and Deceit, inſtead of Juſtice and Plain-dealing; Contention inſtead of Peace; Hypocriſie and Flattery, inſtead of Singleneſs of Heart; Superſtition inſtead of Faith, and Earth

ſought for, inſtead of the Kingdom of God, and its Juſtice.

This is the Face of things, and even of that part of the Chriſtian World, whoſe Goſpel and Faith is not to be queſtion'd; ſo that, while Truth is ſecur'd to the Church by the Promiſes of God, and the Aſſiſtance of his unerring Spirit, and abundant Proviſion made for all kind of Holineſs and Grace; yet notwithſtanding this Good Seed ſown by the Maſter of the Field, there is ſo much Corruption, Scandals, Abuſes, Prophaneneſs and Wickedneſs, amongſt the Members of it, both Paſtors and Flock, that the Tares every where appearing, the Good Corn is ſcarce to be diſcern'd. Theſe Tares are very remarkable to Travellers, and theſe judging of the whole, by what is ſo obvious to them, they often conclude, there can be no Truth, where ſo many unwarrantable Practices are tolerated. Theſe Tares are manifeſt to Seekers, and they are many times diſcourag'd from all farther enquiry, by the Scandalous Vices of thoſe, who are Profeſſors of the Truth. Nay, this is ſo great a Stumbling-block to ſuch, as are in a great meaſure convinc'd of the Principles and Means in the Church, for teaching the Truth, that they are often at a ſtand for many Years, before they can

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get over it, and reconcile the Corrupt Abuſes of Church-men, with the Truth and Doctrine of the Church. In this manner, the Superſtitions and Irregularities of Eccleſiaſticks, Religious and Laity, obſcure that Light, Chriſt has ſet up, for leading the whole World into Truth, and ſmother that Evidence, which otherwiſe would be a Force upon the moſt Obſtinate.

This it was Chriſt foreſaw, and for the help of ſincere Enquirers, he propoſes this Parable, to remove this Block out of their way, or, at leaſt, to help them over it. He ſhews, that tho' the Church, which is the Field of Chriſt, be Holy, thro' the Good Seed ſown in it, yet, it is not to be expected, that all ſhould be found Holy, who are within the Enclo-ſure: Tares are likewiſe ſown by the Enemy, thro' their neglect, who ought to be more watchful; theſe grow up, in many evil Practices, and are mix'd with the Good Corn, and this is the Poſture of Chriſt's Church on Earth. This ſame Information he gives in other Parables, as of the Ten Virgins, (the Figure of his Church) of which number, Ten were Wiſe, and Ten Fooliſh: And in the Parable of the Floor, in which there was not only Wheat, but likewiſe Straw and

Chaff: In this Senſe, the Apoſtle ſays, In a great Houſe, there are not only Veſſels of Gold and Silver, but alſo of Wood and Clay, ſome Veſſels of Honour, and ſome of Diſhonour; and in the ſame muſt be underſtood, what Chriſt ſays, That many are call'd, but few are choſen: And theſe very Parables *S. Cyprian* and *S. Auguſtin* make uſe of againſt the *Donatiſts*, to prove the unreaſonableneſs of their ſeparating from the Church, becauſe of the Corrupt Practices of her Members; hence ſhewing, that tho' there be Tares in the Church, yet it cannot be juſtifiable in any to ſeparate from the Corn, on account of the Tares. And this muſt be a Light to all thoſe, who look for the Truth, clear enough to inform them, that Corruptions being found amongſt the Members of the Church, is not enough to juſtifie them in living ſeparate from it; and likewiſe to demonſtrate their Injuſtice, who condemn the Church, becauſe of the Tares found in it.

But why are not the Tares rooted up, ſince they are ſo Injurious to thoſe within, and ſo Scandalous to thoſe without the Church? There are not wanting Pious Souls, whoſe Zeal, like the Servants mention'd in the Goſpel, puſhes them on, not only to deſire, but to undertake this Work;

Work; and in all Ages there have been Apostolick Men, who have made great Reformations. But however some Disorders there are, so strengthen'd by Power, Interest, or Number, that to attempt to root them out, would be followed with such Confusions, that the ill Consequence of endeavouring their Cure, would be much greater than their ill Example in being tolerated. Upon which Consideration, the Master silenc'd the Zeal of those Servants, who made the motion of gathering up the Tares, by telling them of the danger of rooting up the Wheat with the Tares, and, upon this, requiring them to *let both grow till the Harvest.* This is the Answer S. *Augustin* made to *Parmenion* the Donatist. *The Consideration,* says he, *of preserving Peace, sometimes keeps off the Severity of Discipline, which nevertheless is put in execution, when it can be done securely, and there is evident reason to hope, that Ecclesiastical Censures may work a wholesom Correction, without the Wound of Schism.*

But however, tho' the Tares are thus spar'd, 'tis in favour of the Corn, and only for a time: For at the Harvest, Command will be given to gather the Tares, and to cast them into the Fire; and this must be the unhappy Fate of all those, who

who by their Scandalous Practices, are like Tares in the Church; they must be the Fuel of Everlasting Fire, in which they shall be tormented, but not consum'd. Unhappy Tares, who by their united Interest and Strength, are beyond the Power of being corrected by Humane Means, and must be left to the Justice of an Almighty Hand, without the possibility of Amendment or Relief! But what is on Earth impracticable in General, is in the Power of every Particular; tho' the whole cannot be reform'd, yet every single Person of this Number, may receive the Benefit of Mercy here on Earth, if they will but seek it in earnest. This is is we beg of thee, O God, for our selves, as far as we are concern'd, and for all others, who by their Wickedness, are comprehended under this Figure of the Tares. Give to all a Sense of their Disorders, that they may understand, how great an Evil it is to forsake thy Law, to be a Dishonour to thy Church, and by their Scandalous Example, to draw others into the Way of Damnation, and discourage those, who seek for Truth: Grant them Grace to amend, without waiting for Company, and effectually to make use of those Means, thou hast ordain'd for their Establishment in Virtue, that thus be-

becoming good Corn, they may not be found amongſt the Tares, which are to be caſt into endleſs Flames.

Sixth Sunday *after* Epiphany.

EPISTLE,

1 *Theſ.* C. 1. V. 2. ends V. 10.

WE give thanks to God for you all, without ceaſing, remembering you always in our Prayers. An excellent Leſſon of Gratitude and Charity; evidently ſhewing what a deep impreſſion the Bleſſings of God had made in the Soul of this Apoſtle, and how great a Sollicitude he had always for his Flock. Two neceſſary Duties for every Paſtor: For if God gives a Bleſſing to their Labours in doing good to their Flock, 'tis but juſt they ſhould with Gratitude daily acknowledge, whoſe Bleſſings they are: And to omit this Point, as it argues their being either Forgetful or Inſenſible of the Mercy; ſo it may eaſily ſhut God's Hand againſt them, and be the occaſion of withdrawing his Aſſiſtance, without which they can never hope for the like Succeſs. But giving thanks for what is paſt, is not ſufficient; for what can any Bleſſings avail

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the Flock, if there be not a continuance of them. They who acknowledge it an Effect of the Divine Goodneſs, if by their means any have been reclaim'd from the Miſery of Ignorance, Error or Vice, know it muſt be the Effect of the ſame Heavenly Bounty, to ſecure thoſe ſame Perſons againſt all danger of relapſing; and that, conſidering Humane Weakneſs, and the powerful Enemies of this Mortal State, all promiſing Beginnings, and greateſt Improvements, will come to nothing, if the Bleſſing of the ſame Hand, that begun, does not perfect the Work: Hence thoſe Paſtors, who have ſeen any Fruit of their Labours, are Sollicitous, with *St. Paul*, to beg God's Mercy on all thoſe, who have receiv'd Benefit from their Endeavours, daily remembering them in their Prayers, and begging God to be their Protection againſt the Dangers of their own Weakneſs, and the Sollicitations of all Enemies. And truly whoever conſiders the infinite Miſcarriages of the Flock, for want of this Divine Aſſiſtance, in the numbers of thoſe, who after zealous and fervent Beginnings, have either return'd to the Vomit, or loſt all Senſe of Duty, by giving themſelves up to Habitual Sloth or Vice, will find ſufficient reaſon for the daily practice of this Charitable Devotion. And no queſtion,

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it was the Senſe of this Danger and In-conſtancy, inſeparable from this our ſtate of Corruption, mov'd the Apoſtle daily to perform this Charity.

And may we not in this diſcover ſome grounds of believing the Bleſſed in Heaven to pray before the Throne of God, in behalf of all thoſe, they have left behind in this Vale of Miſery? For ſince this is the Effect of Charity, and *Charity*, as S. *Paul* ſays, *never ceaſes*; *nunquam excidit*; but is much more perfect in Heaven than on Earth; it muſt neceſſarily follow, that where it is more perfect, it cannot be more barren and unactive, but muſt be practis'd in greater Perfection. S. *Paul*, and all Chriſtians, whilſt as yet in this imperfect ſtate, knowing the great Neceſſities and Dangers of their Fellow Members, cannot be ſuppos'd to have Charity, if they put up not their Prayers to their Common Father, for the obtaining for them his help; and can it be imagin'd, this Charity, when rais'd in Heaven to a much higher degree, ſhould do leſs? Thoſe Bleſſed Souls now glorified, are ſtill Members of the Myſtical Body of Chriſt, they are enflam'd with the Love of God; this Love is not more confin'd for being in Heaven, and therefore extends it ſelf, as before, to all their Fellow Members; Fervent Deſires, of their

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Eternal Good, are the neceſſary Conſequence of this Love; and Effectual Deſires cannot be ſeparated from contributing to it all they can: Being therefore in preſence of that inexhauſtible Goodneſs, by whoſe Mercy they themſelves were conducted thro' all Dangers, and effectually deſiring the ſame Mercy for all as are ſtill in want, theſe Deſires are accompanied with Prayers, for the filling up the number of the Elect. Thus all Good Souls, whether in Heaven or Earth, being Members of the ſame Body, deſire the good of this Body, and are united in Prayers for the drawing down the Bleſſings of its Head on all that belong to it: And 'tis of theſe Prayers all Good Chriſtans deſire to partake, and deſiring it, they likewiſe Pray for it; that ſo, what is wanting thro' their Infirmities, they may hope to have ſupplied by this common Charity.

The Prayers then of others, may be a help to Chriſtians, for the Application of Chriſt's Merits to their Souls; but 'tis only a help, and cannot alone ſuffice. There are other Particulars, which S. *Paul* commends in the *Theſſalonians*, and at the ſame time recommends them to our Care and Practice: As,

Firſt, The *Works of Faith*, that is a Faith active and lively, which manifeſts

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it ſelf in the exact obſervance of all the Commandments.

Secondly, A *Firm Hope*, which lets not go its hold of God under the ſevereſt Trials: And,

Thirdly, A *Laborious Charity*, which takes pains for obtaining the Perfection neceſſary for the ſecuring our future State. 'Tis in the conſtant practice of theſe Virtues conſiſts a Chriſtian Life, and conſequently, by theſe a Chriſtian ought to be diſtinguiſh'd from all others. So that 'tis not enough for one that profeſſes this Name, to go on juſt in the ſame Method, and doing the very ſame things, he would otherwiſe do, were he no Chriſtian at all; but he ought generally ſo to act, that what he does, may be a proof of his Soul being influenc'd by theſe Divine Virtues. For as for the Lawyer aſſiſting his Clients, the Phyſician making his Viſits, the Shop keeper following his Trade, Servants working, Parents providing for Children and Family, *&c.* all this is nothing but what they would faithfully do, were they only Moral Heathens, and no Chriſtians. For tho' the careful performance of theſe common Duties may be all Chriſtian Actions, and very inſtrumental to the gaining Eternal Life, if done upon due Motives, and referr'd to God; yet ſince they may be all

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perform'd too upon other Principles, as of Interest, Custom, or the Inclinations of Natural Constitution, which strongly move some to a great exactness in whatever they undertake; therefore there's a necessity of something beyond this, to discover with some assurance, whether a Christian proceeds, in what he does, on those better Motives of Faith, Hope and Charity, which ought to have the direction of his Life, and may give Testimony, that his Actions are the Effects and Works of these Virtues.

And for this, I know no better Rule, than for every one to observe, how they proceed in performing such Duties, which sometimes are contrary to all Humane Interest, or at least, have no such Interest depending on them: If they are equally Sollicitous and Faithful in satisfying these, truly they have then great reason to believe, that what they do, are the Works of Faith, of Hope, and of Charity; But if it appears otherwise in them; that they are ever diligent and zealous in all things, that have a prospect of some *Gain* or *Reputation* at the end of them; but in such as have no connection with these, and regard only God, and his Justice, and their Souls good, are cold and careless; as in mastering their own Passions, avoiding

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the Occasions of Sin, by depriving themselves of some Temporal Convenience, in maintaining the Cause of Justice and Truth, with hazard to themselves, in affording their Souls due Nourishment, in daily Reading and Praying, truly all Coldness and Neglect in such Particulars, is enough to make them conclude, that Worldly Respects have a much greater share in what they do, than the Faith or Love of God.

For if a Pastor, Physician, or Lawyer, there zealously gives attendance, where he has the Encouragement of a Temporal Reward, and generally makes some excuse, when the Poor are to be help'd: If Parents are careful to gratifie their Children, in such things, which, like little Charms, are fit to gain or encrease their Love, but omit all such Ways, as are necessary to moderate their Passions, and prepare them for a Virtuous Life: If Servants are diligent under their Master's Eye; but are then wanting to their Duty, when they have no witness of their Sloth: This is very near a demonstration, that all they do are not the Works of Faith, or of Charity, but of Interest and Self-love. And what proof then can these give of their being Christians, who move not by the Springs or Principles of the Gospel, but

but go on in the very ſame Method, they would do, were they no Pretenders to that Profeſſion? And yet, O God, is not this the too general practice of thoſe that own that Name? They ſay, they have a Faith of Eternal Goods, that they hope one Day to be poſſeſs'd of them, and that they Love Thee: But where are the Marks of this Profeſſion, whilſt the Love of themſelves, and the Intereſt of this World, appear ſo viſibly in almoſt all they do? *Omnes quæ ſua ſunt quærunt*, I fear is their too general Character; and how canſt Thou come to be their Eternal Poſſeſſion, who here take ſo little Care to ſeek Thee? Give ear therefore, we beſeech Thee, to the Prayers of all the Juſt, whether on Earth, or in Heaven, who are ever Sollicitous for the Welfare of their Brethren; and thro' the Infinite Merits of thy Only Son, grant, in the plentiful Effuſion of thy Grace, an effectual Remedy to this Evil.

Sixth Sunday *after* Epiphany.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 13. V. 31. ends V. 35.

THE Kingdom of Heaven is like a Grain of Muſtard-ſeed. In this Parable is given us by Chriſt an Idea of the Church and her Doctrine, in appearing but inconſiderable in their beginning, and very great in their Progreſs; for this is principally ſignified both in the Muſtard-ſeed and Leaven, which make up the Subject of this Goſpel. But becauſe theſe are Marks, which, in ſome kind belong to all that is Humane; there being no Empire or Religion, tho' moſt abſurd, which have at any time grown powerful in the World, but what have been Contemptible in their Infancy, and firſt Abetters, we muſt therefore ſee, wherein theſe Marks are Particular to the Church and Doctrine of Chriſt.

The Works of Men are generally inconſiderable in their Beginnings, but 'tis never by their own Will and Choice; they always aim at Pomp and Greatneſs, and if they accompliſh not their Deſigns at

at the first Attempt, 'tis ever against their Wills, and the only reason is, because they cannot. For this Cause, the most Commanding Empires of the World, never shew'd the greatest Power in their first beginning, because they had it not. And *Mahomet*, as soon as he was strengthen'd by the number of Followers, presently took Arms, and bent all his Force to subject People to him. There is nothing of this in the Little Beginnings of the Church: For its Littleness was according to the Choice and positive Will of Christ. This Will he manifested in himself, after the Wonders at his Birth, chusing so many Years of an obscure and private Life; and afterwards, tho' having all things subject to his power, never pretending to any degree of State, or to any thing, that could render him Great in the Eyes of the World, his Conversation was generally with the Poor; to the Poor he preach'd, not in Courts, but in the Desart and Mountains; his Miracles were amongst the Distress'd, and never before Princes; and tho' they were such, as both in Number and Manner, were never wrought by any other, yet they were much diminish'd, and the Glory of them eclips'd to the *Jews*, by his Poverty, and the Meanness of his Living and Retinue,

chuſing thoſe for his Followers, who had neither Authority nor Intereſt to gain upon the World. Thus was Chriſt Little in all his Ways, and all was the Effect of his Choice, and not of Force.

The ſame is more viſible in the Method he took for Converting the World, making no uſe either of Arms or Power, but only of the Preaching of a few Fiſhermen, and Eſtabliſhing his Doctrine, not ſo much by Miracles, as by that which is moſt Contemptible in the World, even by their Contempt, Reproaches, Perſecution, and Suffering; all their Perſwatives being to deſpiſe that, which Inclination and Cuſtom recommend as Great and Honourable, and ſetting a Value upon nothing, but what the World deſpiſes; that is, upon Suffering, Forgiving, not Retaliating, upon Poverty, Meekneſs and Humility. Thus was the Church Little in its Beginning, both as to its Foundation and Head, who was Chriſt, as to its Paſtors, the Apoſtles, as to the manner of being Propagated, and its Doctrine. And how did it ſoon become Great, when, within a few Ages, it comprehended within its Pale thoſe Nations and Peoples, which had oppos'd it, when it ſpread from Eaſt to Weſt, and had the greateſt Emperors and Princes ſubjecting themſelves to its Direction? Now

Now as the Church was Little in its Origine, not by Force, but by the expreſs Will of God, and was reſembled by the Muſtard-ſeed; ſo I think in the ſame, all that are Members of the Church, have directions for the general Method, they ought to take all their Lives: The Members of the Church ought to follow the Method of the Church; and what Chriſt declar'd to be his Choice for it, ſhews what is to be their Choice.

And what is this Method? They ought to chuſe to be Little; they are to eſteem thoſe things moſt Valuable, which the World moſt undervalues; they are not to affect Noiſe and Pomp, nor love any thing, that draws the Eyes of the World upon them: And as for Greatneſs, they are chiefly to be Sollicitous for that only, which is the Effect of thus voluntarily leſſning themſelves.

This is a hard Leſſon for a World, wherein Pride and Ambition make up a Torrent, which, with the violence of its Streams, carries away almoſt all, that are Born into it; ſo that the Abridgment of the Chriſtian's Life, thro' this Corruption, may be compriz'd in theſe few words, of being eagerly bent upon magnifying himſelf, by all the Vanity and Pomp, that is within his reach. This is but too viſi-

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ble from the common Practice of the World, where, in proportion to what every one has receiv'd, ſo they endeavour to make a Noiſe and Shew, and ſeem to meaſure their Happineſs, by the number of their Admirers. This is the Deſign in their Table and Dreſs, in their Furniture and Retinue; to this are turn'd whatever Advantages they have of Nature; this is the End of their Education; ſo that inſtead of teaching Youth the Humility and Self-denial of the Goſpel, they train them up in all the little Arts of Vanity, take pains to make them in love with themſelves, and fond of being admir'd by others.

Now for Temporal and Worldly Souls to take this Method, is no wonder, becauſe theſe are the proper Means to be Temporally and Worldly Great; but for Chriſtian and Believing Souls to be ſo bent upon it, is a matter of juſt Surprize, ſince the Goſpel, which, they ſay, they believe and follow, leads them quite another way, and ſhews, that the Greatneſs, which they ought to ſeek, is to be the Effect of their chuſing here to be little; and that for them to be Sollicitous for Worldly Greatneſs, is the ready way to be diſappointed in that more Subſtantial Glory, which is the End of their Being,

and their Faith. This is so true, that there is not any thing, tho' the most Commendable Duties of a Christian State, which lose not their whole Value, if perform'd with a Design of growing in the Esteem of Men; thus it is pronounc'd by Christ concerning Almsgiving, Fasting, and Prayer; and the Apostle declares, that if in his Preaching the Gospel, he should be Sollicitous to please Men, he, upon this, should be no Servant of Jesus Christ. If this then be of such a pernicious Nature, that like a Cancer, it eats out the Marrow, and renders the best of Actions, not only useless, but turns them all into Corruption; what must their unhappiness be, who, in Consequence to their Faith, pretending to live and labour for Eternity, make it the main Business of their Life and Labour, of their Learning, Goods and Money, to be great in the Opinion of Men, and magnifie themselves in this World? Is it not evident, that whatever they do, of this kind, is all lost as to Eternity; and that when the time of Retribution comes, they shall be confounded with this reproachful Check to all expectation, of their having already receiv'd their Reward?

But what then, is all good to be done in the dark, lest the observation of Men should

should destroy its whole Value? The Gospel gives frequent Cautions upon this Subject, but so that Christians are encourag'd to let their Light shine before Men, for the Example of others, and the Glory of God. A Nice Point, for Good Works to be done so, as to be seen, and not that they may be seen. And yet so it is, that whoever does good, proposing to himself the Commendation and Applause of Men, cuts off the entail, of whatever, otherwise, would be a Reward of such Good.

What then is to be the Rule? No other, but what Christ has appointed: Christians are to do good, to be a Light to their Neighbour, and that God may be glorified; this is the extent of their Commission; by this is to be regulated all they do; the Edification of their Neighbour, and the Glory of God, must give Life to all their Actions; and all the Projects must be stifled, which are design'd for earthly Greatness, and have nothing, but Self-love and Pride to spur them on. Hence are to be avoided all Self-commendations; Applause is not to be sought in Good Works, no Interest is to be made for Church Preferment: If some State is to be allow'd, yet none ought to be lov'd; if Decency requires some Ornaments,

Pride ought not to be the Interpreter, how far this ought to go: If a Numerous Family demands a Plentiful Proviſion, Magnificence ought not to furniſh the Table: If Servants are to be commanded, it is not to be with an Imperious Haughtineſs: If Failings are to be reprov'd, it is not to be with Contempt or Self-eſteem.

Thus Pride is to be baniſh'd, as induſtriouſly as we can; all is to be done without Noiſe and Flutter; the Soul is to be kept Humble, the Contempt and Reproach of Men is not to be regarded; and by this way of appearing but Inconſiderable, are Chriſtians to hope for that Greatneſs, which is the Fruit of Humility, and much more to the purpoſe, than that which the World gives, being the Effect of Pride, a Fruit only ſuperficial, and no more laſting than its Root.

This is thy Goſpel, O Jeſus; 'tis that which Chriſtians pretend to follow; but they ſeem to have another Goſpel, even that which the World preaches to them, which is the Rule of their Conduct. But I know, there is no Salvation, but from thine; and that if an Angel ſhould come and teach any other, I ought not to hear it. Make me ſteddy therefore, I beſeech thee, to thy Saving Truths, and let not the World ſo prevail on me, as to for-

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ſake what thou haſt taught. This is my ſincere Deſire, and may thy Grace confirm me in this Good Will, that I may never ſeek either the Eſteem or Greatneſs of the World, but in an Humble Spirit, ever confeſs my own Miſery, and never think of any other Greatneſs, but thy Self.

Septuageſima-Sunday.

EPISTLE,

1 *Cor.* C. 9. V. 24. ends C. 10. V. 5.

RUN *ſo that you may gain the Prize.* With this Day the Church begins her Preparation for the Solemn Faſt of *Lent*, now approaching; and by the Purple Colour of her Veſtments, and ſilencing the uſual *Allelujahs* and Hymns of Joy in her Publick Service, ſhe ſeems to expect, that by a general Humiliation and Mourning, her Children ſhould prepare for this great Faſt; that by this way, they may obtain that Grace, which is neceſſary for their due obſervance of it, and reaping that Benefit, which ſhe deſigns them, in ſatisfying the Juſtice of God, and being cleans'd from all their Sins. For this end, is pro-

pos'd to them in this Epistle, the true state of Christians in this Life; and the true Spirit, by which they are to prevent all the Mischiefs of it, occasion'd by their own Infirmities and Wickedness. Their State is represented by the Apostle, in *Men running a Race*, where, he says, *All run, but all gain not the Prize: Wherefore*, says he, *so run, that you may gain it.* We are all now actually upon this Race, all hastning to an Eternity: There's Propos'd a Prize of Everlasting Bliss: And who shall gain it? Only those that run well. 'Tis a Point therefore every one ought seriously to consider this Day, and see, whether they make any advance towards it: Following the Allusion, will be some help for their making a true judgment of themselves. For, as in a Race, those who run from the Mark, are not in a possibility of winning, if they turn not their Course; but the more they go on, the farther they are out of the way; Those, who fall, are in a like impossibility, if they rise not again, and with new Vigour pursue their Course: Those, who are at a stand, or go out of their way, are in evident danger of losing the Prize, if by extraordinary diligence they regain not the ground and time that was lost: And only those stand fair for the Crown, who are ever careful with their best

beſt ſpeed to advance. So it is with us in the Race of this Life; and in proportion to this, may every one judge of himſelf. Tell me therefore, Dear Chriſtian, what is thy State: Thou art on thy Race; and believeſt Heaven the Recompence of thoſe that win: How is it with thee? Doſt thou make forwards apace? Or art thou quite at a ſtand? Doſt thou go out of thy way? Doſt thou lye down in Diſpair? Or doſt thou run ſtill farther from what thou pretend'ſt to gain? Living in a ſinful State, is running from the Mark, and with thy Back towards God and Heaven: An immoderate Affection of Creatures, tho' in themſelves lawful, is going out of the way: Sloth and Tepidity, is ſtanding quite ſtill, if it be not worſe: Anxiety and Dejection, is lying on the ground: And only the Love of God, a Zeal for his Law, and a ſincere Repentance after Sin, is that which carries thee forward on thy way. Conſider now; art thou running forward or backward? Art thou at a ſtand, or going out of the way? The time granted for finiſhing the Race is not long; when Death comes, it will then appear, where thou art; and as thou art then found, ſo it will be with thee for ever: And will it not be a terrifying inſtant to thee, if, when the time of thy Race is expir'd,

it shall be then found, thou hast scarce ever seriously begun it, or after a fervorous setting forth, hast permitted Trifles to stop thy Course, or quite put thee out of the Way? 'Tis this Misfortune, the Church, as a Tender Mother Sollicitous for all her Children, is desirous to prevent: And having reason to apprehend great numbers to be under these ill Circumstances, and that very few can pretend an exemption, therefore She here lays before them such Means, as may be effectual for regaining the time, whatever has been lost, and removing such Obstacles, as have hitherto been a hindrance to them in their Way, and may be a great help for happily finishing that part of their Race, which is yet to come.

The first thing prescrib'd is included in those words of S. *Paul*, where he says, That those who pretend to carry the Prize in any Publick Game, *abstain from all things*, that may be a hindrance to them: And if they observe this Method, who contend for a *Corruptible Crown*; how much more ought Christians to do the same, who are engag'd for a *Crown that is incorruptible?* 'Tis the Apostle's Inference, and carries with it this Advice, that all Christians, who think in earnest to gain this Crown, are under a Necessity of practising a like Rigorous

gorous Abſtinence, ſuch as not only regards their Diet, but every thing, which they Experience to be a Hindrance to them; *Ab omnibus ſe abſtinet.* 'Tis the Misfortune of this Mortal State, that our Inclinations being corrupt, lead us, not only to what is Inconvenient and Dangerous, but likewiſe Inconſiſtent with the well finiſhing our Race; and 'tis the indulging and following theſe, puts as many as are put by, quite out of their way: Hence is the Occaſion of all the Stops and Stands we make; hence all the Hazard of loſing the Crown. Now if our Misfortune be in *Following*, our Happineſs muſt be in *Denying* our Inclinations, which the Apoſtle calls *Abſtaining*; and 'tis only thus we can hope for Succeſs. Every one muſt conſider for themſelves, in what Particulars this Abſtinence is principally to be practis'd: Their general, and moſt repeated Faults, will be their beſt direction; it may be in the Government of the Tongue, of the Eyes, or the Affections; it may be in regard of Company, Diverſiſements or Expences; it may be in the moderation of Paſſion, Fretfulneſs, Vanity, Covetouſneſs, Self-love; in the overcoming Animoſities, Ill-will or Sloth. Where-ever the Exceſs has been, there muſt be now the Abſtinence. This is the Goſpel-Expedient of Self-denial,

neceſſary for removing all Obſtacles out of our way, and to put us in the beſt Method for coming to a happy end of our Race, and gaining the Crown.

But if ill Habits prove obſtinate, and will not yield, neither muſt a Chriſtian yield to them, but is under a kind of neceſſity of taking ſome more rigorous way, as may be adviſable by thoſe, to whom it belongs to judge of this Leproſie, and preſcribe its Cure. The Example of this Apoſtle is Motive ſufficient, who being then upon the Race, as we now are, *Ego quidem curro*, and not willing to hazard any thing in this important Affair, tho' we know not of any neceſſity, yet for greater ſecurity, practis'd this Advice upon himſelf. *I chaſtiſe my Body*, ſays he, *and bring it into ſubjection; leſt, while I preach to others, I my ſelf ſhould become a Reprobate.* Now if this great Apoſtle thought not fit to diſpence with himſelf in this kind of Mortification, how vain muſt the Arguments of our Preſumption, Niceneſs, and Self-love be, in favouring and exempting our ſelves, who ſtand ſo much more in need of it? If he whoſe Life was the continual practice of a moſt laborious Charity, who otherwiſe ſuffer'd ſo much in Faſting, Watching, in Priſons, and repeated Martydoms, thought himſelf not

yet

yet secure enough, but still added voluntary Mortification to all the rest, what can we pretend? 'Tis a terrible Lesson, and such as must necessarily raise Confusion, where it does not move to imitation.

In this double Prescription, the Church prepares us for *Lent*, and lets us know, what is expected from us. And do Thou, O God, we beseech Thee, inspire all thy Servants with such a true Sense of their State, and with the Resolutions of using such Means, as may be now seasonable, and most effectual for finishing well the Race in which they are. Grant they may not Run, as it were at hazard, by losing the sight of the place, to which they pretend to go: Grant they may not Fight, as it were beating the Air, in presuming to overcome, without mortifying their Sensuality and Concupiscence, but that they may so diligently pursue their Course, that at the end they may gain the Crown.

Sep-

Septuagesima-Sunday.

GOSPEL,

Mat. C. 20. V. 1. ends V. 16.

GO *you also into my Vineyard.* The Subject of this Gospel, is a Parable of the Master, who finding Men standing Idle in the Market, at several Hours of the Day, reprov'd them for their Idleness, and sent them to work in his Vineyard. A Seasonable Lesson for this time, when being call'd upon by the Church to prepare for *Lent*, now approaching, we may consider the Work the have to do, and enter into serious Resolutions of undertaking it, in Obedience to his Commands and Mercy, who this Day begins to Summon us to work.

As many as are Christians, are call'd to Labour in the Vineyard: This Vineyard is of a larger extent to some than others: Those, who have the Charge of Souls, have the greater Task, because they are not only to work for their own Sanctification, but also of as many others, as they have Souls under their Care. Hence the Labour they are call'd to, becomes immense;

First,

Firſt, In fitting themſelves for their Obligation, both in acquiring Learning, and the better Qualifications of Grace, which are abſolutely Neceſſary for the Diſcharge of the Paſtoral Function. Secondly, In giving Aſſiſtance to thoſe under their Charge, both in Inſtructing, Comforting, Reproving and Exhorting, and ever proportioning their Labour to the Neceſſities of their Flock, which being Endleſs in one way or other, their Labours muſt be ſo too. This is the Poſture of their Vineyard, and ſuch is to be their Labour; in which there is to be neither Vacation nor Diſpenſation, but what is of Force by their being diſabled. Wherefore, as for thoſe, who are preparing for this Function, if they give not Demonſtration of an Induſtrious, Laborious and Vigorous Spirit, whatever other Advantages they may have, of Capacity, Learning, and Parts, they ſhould never have my Vote for their Promotion. Becauſe the Charge is ſuch, as cannot be ſatisfied without great Labour; and to Preſent ſuch as are of an Idle, Slothful and Sluggiſh Temper, and give little hopes of Change, is to ſay, I chooſe thoſe for great Labour, whom I think not fit or likely to Labour. Who would do thus, if he had Work of his own to be done? Why therefore ſhall ſuch be choſen to

work

work in Chriſt's Vineyard? And as for thoſe, who have already undertaken the Charge; and yet live, in a manner, Idle, I can only Pity and Pray for them, and deſire the ſame Charity of others, that they may foreſee that Evening, when all are to be call'd to receive their Pay, and conſider in time what there's will be: For if they are reprov'd, who are found Idle in the Market, what muſt they expect, who being hir'd to work, are found Idle in the Vineyard?

The Vineyard and Work of others is more confin'd, their Principal Buſineſs being to Cultivate their own Souls, and make them bring forth Fruit to Life Everlaſting: But however, this is a Work ſtill, which obliges all to Labour; for the Soul of Man, thro' its Natural Corruption, is like a Barren Soil, overgrown with Thorns, cover'd with Stones, without Incloſure, open to all Paſſengers, both Men and Beaſts: Thus it is render'd by its perverſe Inclinations, by its Stubborn and Carnal Paſſions, by its Eaſineſs in giving ear to the pleaſing Flatteries of Self-love, the Devil, and the World: Such is the Vineyard of all Chriſtians, and yet Barren as it is, it muſt bring forth Fruit; this is their Buſineſs; for this they are call'd to work: And can this be done, without their working?

ing? A plentiful Harveſt may as reaſonably be expected from Ground, that lies Common, as Good Fruit from the Soul of Man, if he ſits ſtill with his Hands tied by Sloth, or his Mind diſſipated with Folly, Vanity, or Impertinency, ſo as to be little Sollicitous for the Work he has to do. For how ſhall he be ſecure from the Snares of Ill Company, Ill Example, and a Deceitful World, if he be not daily watchful againſt their Treacherous Attempts? How ſhall his Deſires and Paſſions be ſubjected to the Government of Reaſon and Faith, if inſtead of Labouring, by Self-denials to bring them into Subjection, he feeds their Corruption by undue Liberties, and daily ſtrengthens them in their Rebellion? How ſhall he diſcover his own Weakneſſes, if he takes no Care to obſerve them? How is he to expect help from above, if he be not Sollicitous in ſeeking it? How ſhall he abound in good Works, if the obtaining thoſe Virtues are no part of his Concern, which are the Seed, from whence they muſt grow?

Hence appears the Neceſſity of complying with the Command given to every Chriſtian, of *Go and work in the Vineyard*: And if this Work be not the great Buſineſs of his Life; if he not watchful over all his Ways, if he be not Induſtrious

ſtrious in Reading, Zealous in Prayer, Faithful in the Diſcharge of all Duties, Reſolute in Mortifying his Interior Corruption, Courageous in Standing againſt all Aſſaults, the Vineyard muſt neceſſarily be Barren, the want of Fruit will be the Condemnation of his being an Idle Servant, and that having receiv'd a Command of working, he has not work'd.

Hence let all thoſe Chriſtians call themſelves to an Account, whoſe Life being a continual Diſſipation of Thought, betwixt Vanities, Divertiſements, and Entertainments, who being Fond of Company, and the World, are Sollicitous to comply with its Extravagant Ways, and to purchaſe its Favour, and their own Senſual Satisfactions, at any Expence: Thoſe too, who ſpend their Days in Sleeping, Dreſſing, Eating, Viſiting and Gaming: And thoſe likewiſe, whoſe whole Time is engroſs'd by their Worldly and Covetous Cares, ſo as to give little or no place to the Concern of their Souls; let all theſe, I ſay, call themſelves to an Account, and if they do not find their Vineyards overgrown with Thorns, that is, their Souls remarkably Vicious; yet, without the Spirit of Prophecy, one may foretel, there is ſcarcity of that good Fruit, which is expected from the Vineyards of Chriſt. For when I know

there

there is ſome Work not to be effected, but by much Labour; and am ſenſible, there has been little Care and Pains us'd by thoſe that undertook it, tis obvious enough to conclude, the Work is not done. This muſt be the Caſe of theſe Chriſtians; they ſeldom are ſo Induſtrious in any Affair of their Souls, as to ſeem to be Serious, or in earneſt with it; where then can be the Fruit, which requires all the Watchfulneſs, and full ſtrength of a Laborious Soul? No, they are Idle, they work not, and therefore, tis no Raſhneſs to ſay, their Work is not done.

But where the moſt ſerious Endeavours are us'd, the Sincere Chriſtian is not to be diſcourag'd, if he finds ſtill more Work to do: For the Work of the Soul is like that of the Vineyard, never at an end. There will be ſtill a neceſſity of new Endeavours, of Cutting off what is ſuperfluous, of Digging, Manuring, Fencing, Watching: For why ſhould Men be call'd to Work in the Vineyard to the end of the Day, if the Work were not likely to laſt to the end of the Day? This therefore is the Condition of the Chriſtian's Hire, to work till Evening, that is, till the Night of Death cloſes his Eyes; and he is neither to be tir'd with his Labour, nor diſcourag'd at the new Occaſions of it; for as

this

this repeated Labour makes a good Vintage, so it makes the Soul Fruitful. And tho' there may appear sometimes Weeds shooting up, tho' there may be some barren and superfluous Branches, yet there may be a good Vintage still, if these are not neglected, but taken Care of in time; so likewise in the Soul, tho' Weeds appear, tho' some dry and barren Branches, tho' Beasts break in, yet if these are not favour'd, but made the Subject of the Christian's Labour, there may be still good Fruit to recommend it to the Master of the Vineyard.

All then are to Work, and if they are but Faithful from the time they are call'd, whether Early, or at Mid-day, or at the last Hour, they will all receive their Hire, the Last as well as the First, and no Idleness, Antecedent to the Call, will be any Disappointment in the Pay. This is the Assurance Christ himself has given, and is enough to banish all Anxious Fears, occasion'd by looking back on past Disorders. This is the Lesson, O Jesus, thou givest us this Day; give us likewise Grace to follow it, that all Sloth and Idleness being banish'd from thy Vineyard, we may all be Faithful Labourers, that holding on with Patience till the Evening comes, we may then be found at Work, and receive

that

that Hire, which being promis'd by thy Mercy, thy Juſtice cannot deny us.

Sexageſima-Sunday.

EPISTLE,

2 *Cor.* C. 11. V. 19. ends C. 12. V. 9.

I Have ſuffer'd *in Labour and Trouble, in much Watching, in Hunger and Thirſt, in much Faſting, in Cold and Nakedneſs.* The Subject of this Epiſtle, are the Commendations of St. *Paul*, and ſuch as he gives of himſelf, a thing ſeemingly unſuitable to a Diſciple of the Croſs, and a True Profeſſor of Humility. But 'twas what the ill Circumſtances of the *Corinthians* had oblig'd him to, and was not the Effect of Vain-glory, but of his great Zeal and Charity in deſiring their good, tho' with the hazard of being cenſur'd for Pride and Self-conceit. In his abſence, Falſe Apoſtles had inſinuated themſelves amongſt the *Corinthians*, and abuſing their Credulity corrupted them with Errors: Upon which St. *Paul* writes this Epiſtle, in order to undeceive them; and for this End, lays before them the great Advantages he had above their New Teachers, and that if they would

would conſider the greatneſs of his Sufferings, or the wonder of his Revelations, they might have ſufficient Motives to believe him a true Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, and hold faſt his Doctrine; and that in departing from him, they had ſo far abandon'd Chriſt himſelf: So that all his Endeavours of raiſing an Eſteem of himſelf in the Minds of this People, was not to ſeek himſelf, but only to regain them to the Soveraign Paſtor and Biſhop of their Souls. A good Model for us, and ſuch, I wiſh we could ſo follow, as never to ſay or do any thing, in raiſing an Eſteem of our ſelves, but only when forc'd to it for the good of others.

But now, while we ſee St. *Paul* endeavouring to prove himſelf an Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, and principally grounding his Proof on the Evidence of his Sufferings, may not we in this diſcover a good Inſtruction the Church deſigns for all the Faithful? *Viz.* If they deſire to give Proof of their being True Believers, and Diſciples of Chriſt, it cannot be better done than by Suffering: 'Tis propos'd to them at this time, becauſe we are now approaching to *Lent*, when all Chriſtians are ſummon'd to enter into a State of Penance, for the Puniſhment of Sin, and breaking the Strength of thoſe Paſſions, whoſe Violence

Violence has been the Occaſion of their Sin; and, no queſtion, but thoſe, who ſuffer truly for this End, will in this give Teſtimony of their being True Diſciples. There's ſcarce any Sin, but what is the Effect of ſome ill Habit or Paſſion; and none can ſincerely deſire to remedy this, if they will not uſe proper Means for the weakning ſuch Paſſions: This brings an Obligation of ſuffering ſomething in Self-denial and Mortification. Again, there's no Sin, but what we are oblig'd to forſake, and repent of; now there being no ſincere Repentance or Converſion, where there is not an effectual Deſire of ſatisfying the Divine Juſtice, by worthy Fruits of Penance, this engages every Repenting Sinner in a Life of Penance and Suffering, proportion'd to their Sins, and to their Strength. And tho' Cuſtom, or a juſt Condeſcendence of the Church, has remitted very much of the Ancient Rigour of Faſting, and of thoſe laborious Penances formerly impos'd on Returning Sinners; yet no Penitent can ſo think himſelf diſpenc'd with, as if there was not now a like neceſſity of ſatisfying the Divine Juſtice, as in the Primitive times; for tho' the Diſcipline of the Church may not, yet the Juſtice of God, which is unchangeable, ſtill requires the ſame.

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This ought to be done one way or other: Such whose Health or Circumstances will not permit a compliance with those Austerities or Mortifications, which the Church at this time recommends, would do well to make Recompence for it in some other Self-denials, and good Works. And therefore they are much to be commended, who on just Motives, requiring to be dispens'd with, as to the rigour of Fasting, desire some other Penal or Pious Obligation to be laid on them, whereby, tho' they Fast not, yet they may be included in the number of those who suffer for their Sins. Thus every one, without exception, of all Ages and Conditions, have it in their power to give proof of their being Christ's Disciples, by suffering something for the overcoming their own Passions, and adding their Mite to that Treasure of Satisfactions, which they have in Christ, and which by this suitable Concurrence and Union of the Members with their Head, may be effectually applied to them, for the obtaining Pardon of their Sins, and the full discharge of whatever Debt they have contracted by them.

Hence may be plainly discover'd the ill Management of those, who complying in some manner with the Letter of the Law, in eating but one Meal a Day, and

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a Collation at Night, in *Lent*, take Care so to Study their Inclinations, as industriously to take off all manner of Suffering and Mortification from what they do, whether it be by their frequent Supping of Coffee, Chocolate, or Drinking Ale or Wine betwixt Meals, without any kind of Necessity, or making their Collations so Savoury, that thro' the whole *Lent* they cannot pretend to have punish'd, but ever contriv'd to gratifie and please themselves. For tho' these satisfie themselves in having comply'd with the Law, and remove all Scruples, notwithstanding their wilful Exclusion of all manner of Mortification from their Fast, upon these two Principles, of the *End of the Law not falling under the Law*; and *Liquids not breaking the Fast*: Yet they must acknowledge it, even in the most favourable Sense, very ill Management still, who so order their Affairs, as to comply with a Law, and at the same time purposely exclude themselves from all the Benefit of it. Should they pay their Money in this manner for the satisfying a Debt, and so order the Payment, that the Debt should appear still in force against them, they would not only condemn this as an Indiscretion, but as an Injustice done to themselves, in depriving themselves of the Benefit of

what

what they had done: 'Tis likewise a very irrational way of acting; for since all Rational and Humane Actions, ought to have regard to the End, for which they are done; how can this way of Fasting, pass for Rational or Humane, which is not only not directed to its End, but where Means are us'd on purpose to prevent its coming to that End, for which it is intended by God and his Church? And may not there be here some grounds to apprehend, that this is not complying with the Law? For tho' the Law judges not of the interior; yet can it be imagin'd, the Church commands such an Action of Christians, which is not Rational and Christian? Can it possibly command, what it reproves? And is not all that reprov'd, where the Heart accompanies not the outward Action? For what is this, but Pharisaical and Lip-worship? Such a Fast then, which is designedly perverted from its End, cannot be the Church Fast; and if they, who follow this undue Method, think they do not break their Fast, I think they can't pretend at least to keep the *Lent*, which the Church prescribes, but only such as Beasts may keep; and I believe, were even outdone in this by the Beasts of *Ninive*. And here let them consider, how this can be excus'd from Sin:

For

For if Christians are under an Obligation of referring to God, and doing all, whatever they do, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ; certainly this Obligation is more pressing in such things, which are of Precept, and commanded by God and his Church; this is the End of them; to omit the referring them to this End, cannot be without fault; and what then must it be, purposely to pervert them from this End? is not this a design'd perverting an Eternal Law, and the Order God has establish'd: And can this be without Sin? And how can Fasting, or any other Action of Precept, be truly refer'd to God, when it is on purpose diverted from those intermediate Ends, for which it is enjoin'd us by God? This cannot be; it being contrary to the Rule of *Sancta Sanctè: Holy Actions* are to be done in a *Holy Manner*: And to the express Command, God gave to *Moses*: *Quod Justum est, Justè persequeris*: Deut. 16. 20. where he requires not only *Justice* to be done, but also, that it be done in a *Just Manner*. God commands the *Action*, and likewise the *Manner of doing it*: He that observes one and neglects the other, offends against the Law-giver, How then can this Law of Fasting be truly observ'd, if so little regard be had to the manner of

keeping it, that the Letter of the Law being in some degree observ'd, it is so far from being what the Law designs, that it wholly frustrates all the Ends of it? This can be nothing less than mocking God and his Church, and is a neglect of such Means, which are ordain'd for our Salvation. And if there be any, who make a difficulty in understanding it, let them but imagine they had Servants or Children complying with their positive Orders, as they do with this Precept of the Church, without any regard to what they intend, but purposely finding ways to make void all they design, and they'll soon see where the fault is, and that it carries with it Disobedience and Contempt. To exclude then voluntarily, and by contrivance, all Mortification and Suffering from the Fast of *Lent*, which are the End of the Precept, cannot pass for a just observance of the Command; neither can they, who practice this Method, prove themselves true Disciples.

Sexa-

Sexagesima-Sunday.

GOSPEL,
Luke C. 8. V. 4. ends V. 15.

THE *Seed is the Word of God:* But this Seed, however good in it Self, brings not forth Fruit, but according to the Disposition of the Heart, that receives it. The Seed, mention'd in this Parable, was as good, which fell amongst Thorns, Stony-places, and by the Way-side, as that which fell upon good Ground; and while there it is Barren, and here appears in a plentiful Harvest, the Difference is in the Earth, and not in the Seed. This Parable was plainly verified in the Word of Christ himself, and of his Apostles, who Preaching to great numbers, and all alike having their Ears open to their Doctrine, in some it brought forth Fruit, and in others none. Many of the People, who were Sincere, and not having their Hearts prevented by any Passion, admiring what they heard and saw, and becoming Followers of Christ; whilst the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, being over-rul'd by Pride, Interest, and Humane Respects, put wrong

Conſtructions on all that was ſaid or done, and thus grew more Obſtinate under all the Evidence of Truth and Miracles.

Is not this enough to awaken all Chriſtians, and, whilſt they ſeek for Truth, either for the Modelling of their Conſciences by a right Faith, or of the Lives, by the Will of God, to oblige them to put their Hearts into a Diſpoſition of ſuch Sincerity and Reſolution, that neither Careleſneſs, Paſſion, or any Worldly Conſideration, ſhall make Exceptions againſt that way, where the Force of Truth and Right ſeems to lead them? Thus it ought to be, for otherwiſe, there needs no more to make void the Ordinary Means of Grace; and a Chriſtian, that has had all the Opportunities of receiving Light, will, like the *Phariſees*, die in the dark. This is the Unhappy Fate of too many, who, by the Viſits of a particular Grace, having heard and read enough, for the Converſion of a Heathen, ſtand out againſt all ſuch Attempts of Mercy, upon the Force of ſome Impreſſions, which Education or Fear only had made in them; which putting a ſtrong Byaſs on the Judgment, wholly carry it out of the way; and ſo that Truth, which at firſt ſeem'd to touch them, becomes Fruitleſs, as to all the Good, that was deſign'd them.

But

But what then are to be the Diſpoſitions of the Heart, that God's Word may take Root in it? It is not to be hardned, like the High-way, nor open to every thing that paſſes; for in ſuch a Heart it makes no Impreſſion, but will be ſoon trampled under Foot, or carried away by the next Impertinency, that occurs. It muſt not be diſorder'd with any Violence of Paſſion, which, like ſtony Ground, will not permit the Seed to take Root. It muſt not be diſturb'd with an Immoderate Sollicitude for any thing that is Worldly, whether Pleaſures, Riches, or the common Concerns of Life, becauſe theſe, like Thorns, will choak it, and quite prevent its growth.

Theſe are the Cautions, given in this Goſpel: How great then ought to be the Chriſtians Care! He has no Hopes of Salvation, but from God's Word, bringing forth Fruit in his Soul: There is no true Faith, but what is the Fruit of this, and without this Fruit he certainly abides in Error: There can be no Light or Steddineſs for walking in the Way of God's Commandments, but what muſt be the Fruit of this; and without it, he unavoidably walks in the Dark, and goes out of the Way. What Judgment then is to be made of all thoſe, who have their Hearts

open to all manner of Dissipations, their Heads turn'd with good Fortune, or busied in all kind of amusing Follies? What of those, whose Passions are so strong, that tho' they renounce not all Exercises of Piety, yet 'tis ever within such Bounds, that they seem to compound with Heaven, leaving a Reserve for such Exceptions, as their Passions make? And what of those, whose busie Souls are so overwhelm'd with Temporal Concerns, that tho' they have Light enough to see, yet have not Liberty to think, or be serious in what's Eternal; but whenever this begins to press, there is still some necessary Business to put it by, till another time, and yet this time they cannot find? I wish there were place to judge favourably of them, or that they had Reason to do it of themselves; but this Gospel allows of no such Favour, and shews, that all their Hopes are vain, in pronouncing their Indispositions to be such, as hinders the Word of God to be Fruitful in them; and whence then can their Salvation come?

Here then may Christians see what their present Obligation is, and what must be the Work of the Approaching *Lent*. In this Imperfect State there cannot be expected a Total Application to Things Divine, or an Absolute Exemption from Dis-

Disorder'd Passions, or the Distracting World; these Difficulties are the Inseparable Conditions of this Life; but since they cannot be divided from them, it must be their Business, not to be overcome by them. If Nature be heavy, unwilling to look up, and more unwilling to take Pains, in laboring to be Good, it must be spur'd on, and force'd, even against Inclination: For if Temper be averse to all that's Pious, and Humour takes Place of every Exercise, that's capable of mending it, what must be the Consequence, but that the Natural Man will be strengthned in his Corruption, and all the Business of Eternity brought into Despair? And must not those then, who find this Difficulty thus prevailing in them, use some suitable Means to overcome it? Truly, if they give not some Check to the Distractions of their Vain, Curious, and Unprofitable Thoughts, and learn not to be serious in what concerns their Soul, not only so, as to Read sometimes, and Pray, but likewise to make this a Business, to consider upon the Disposition of their Hearts, see what their Disorders are, and what must be their Help; they must be number'd amongst those Unhappy Ones, who, figur'd by the High-way, are never like to bring forth Fruit.

If Nature be subject to Prevailing Passions, such as not only disturb, (for this may be the Case of the best Christian) but also carry the Heart with them thro' Forbidden Ways; so that tho' some Duties are still perform'd, yet seldom any that interfere with these; what must the Christian do? If he sits still in Peace, as if all were well, he is certainly unhappy; and whatever Fruit appears in him, it will be never such, as can be fit for Harvest. No, he must, by watchful Industry and Labour, strive to overcome those Passions, which make him so often transgress the Law of God; and till he has gain'd so far, as to stand against their Treacherous Suggestions, his Character can be no better, than that of the Stony Ground; which tho' receiving Seed, will still be Barren, as to that Fruit, which is expected from him.

If a Worldly Sollicitude takes up the Soul, and it be bent with too much Eagerness, either to gratifie an Idle or Covetous Temper, 'tis all one what the Business is; for since the Powers of the Soul are so confin'd, that any Immoderate and Constant Care for Earth, renders impracticable the Concern for Heaven, as long as this undue Sollicitude remains, the best Seed must here be Fruitless; and there can be no Remedy, but in Moderating this

this Concern, and bringing the Mind to a juster Temper. If Earth has its Business, has not Heaven its Business too? And if the greater be wholly swallow'd up by that, which ought to be the less, is not here Injustice in all this Life? And where can the Fruit be, when the good Seed is thus daily choak'd up by Thorns and Weeds?

Here then is the Christian's Task; if the Seed of God's Word be not Fruitful in him, he is certainly miserable; there are many things to prevent its Growth, and there can be no Security against Miscarriages, but from his Watchfulness and Labour. This Spirit thou must give us, O God; help us therefore by thy Heavenly Grace; and since our Dangers here are so many ways multiplied, let thy Gifts be our Preservation, that neither by Carelessness, Passions, or Immoderate Solicitude for Earthly Things, we may disappoint the Designs of thy Goodness towards us; but having our Hearts dispos'd by thy Grace, we may, like good Earth, bring forth plentiful Fruit of all we receive.

Quinquageſima-Sunday.

EPISTLE,

1 *Cor.* C. 13. the whole Chapter.

IF I give my Body to be burnt, and have not Charity, it profits nothing. The Church deſigning our keeping *Lent*, ſhould be acceptable to God, and beneficial to our own Souls, on this Day takes Care to propoſe to us one Condition abſolutely neceſſary for this End. For aſſuring us from the Apoſtle, that the Actions of the greateſt Virtues, ſuch as are diſtributing all our Goods to feed the Poor, and giving our Bodies to be burnt, are not at all available to Salvation, if we have not Charity; we are in this aſſur'd, that the moſt exact, and even rigorous obſervance of *Lent*, will profit nothing to our Eternal Good, if it be done without Charity; and therefore, that whoever deſigns to keep a Faſt acceptable to God, and to their Souls Advantage, ought to do their beſt to be provided of this ſo neceſſary and indiſpenſible a Virtue, that ſo they may not Faſt in vain.

Now

Now by this Charity, is not meant only *Giving to the Poor*, as tis vulgarly understood; for the Apostle supposes one may distribute all he has to the Poor, and yet be without Charity: But by this Charity is understood, The Love of God and of our Neighbour; a Love, which is the fulfilling of the whole Law; and so 'tis describ'd here by the Apostle, who gives this description of it; *Charity is Patient and Mild; Charity is not Envious, does nothing rashly, 'tis not puffed up, 'tis not Ambitious; it seeks not its own Interest, it is not provok'd, it thinks no evil, it rejoices not in Iniquity, but rejoices in the Truth; it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, suffers all things; Charity never fails.* And 'tis this Charity every Christian should have, who desires to observe the approaching Fast, or perform any Act of Virtue, so as to find Acceptance with God; for whatever he does without it, profits nothing: A terrible Sentence, and such as ought to put every one upon making great Preparations, in bringing their Souls to this necessary Disposition, before they enter upon the Fast of *Lent*: And it being thus necessary, it cannot be improper to consider it more in particular, that so we may have the better Opportunity of examining into the State of our

Souls,

Souls, not only in regard of this Time, but all others, and of Eternity too, since by this we are to stand or fall. We must have Charity then; and what is it? What are the Qualities of it? The Apostle answers; and hear it Expounded by an Excellent Hand, in relation both to God, our Selves, and our Neighbour.

Charity is Patient; it suffers all the seeming delays of God; and tho' ardently desiring, yet peaceably waits his time. It is sensible of its own Miseries, bewails them before God, and ever waits for its Deliverance. It quietly bears the Imperfections of every Neighbour, hopes for their Amendment without Impatience, and asks it of God without being tired.

Charity is Mild, submitting to the Conduct of God without opposition or disquiet; peaceable and moderate is all its own Actions, and far from giving any wilful Disturbance to others.

Charity is not Envious, as to the Glory, which God enjoys, nor appropriates to it self his Gifts; it rejoices that God is God, and gives daily thanks for his Infinite Glory. It is content with the Method God takes in perfecting the inward Man, at the Expence, Humiliation and Mortification of the Outward Man. It rejoices in the good of others, as its own, and con-

conſents they ſhould have the Advantage of him.

Charity Does nothing Raſhly, performing all its Duties to God with Prudence, Circumſpection and Advice: For it ſelf, it does all according to Diſcretion and Meaſure; and for its Neighbour, with Conſideration, and obſerving that Order, which God has eſtabliſh'd.

Charity is not Puff'd up, nor Ambitious; it loves God's Greatneſs, and regards all things belonging to him with Eſteem, Reſpect and Religion: It is always little in its own Eyes, diſeſteems whatever is from it ſelf, conſiders every Neighbour in the moſt favourable Senſe, and it ſelf beneath all.

Charity Seeks not its own Intereſt: It has principally, and above all things, the Glory and Will of God before its Eyes, is ready to Sacrifice to theſe its own private Intereſt and Convenience, is jealous and fearful of ſeeking it ſelf in what it does, and ſincerely endeavours to make every Neighbour's Intereſt its own.

Charity is not Provok'd: It ſubmits to the ſevereſt Appointments of God in ſilence and undiſturb'd; charges all whatever it ſuffers, on its own Sins, but without diſquiet; and whatever Zeal it has againſt Sin, it has ever Compaſſion on the Sinner.

Cha-

Charity Thinks no Evil: It is full of the Sanctity and Juſtice of God, conſiders and juſtifies theſe in all things; and tho' it condemns its own Sins; yet, except where oblig'd, it ſees nothing but the Good, which its Neighbour has, and its Heart is fill'd with Deſigns and Deſires, Pure, Holy, and Edifying.

Charity Rejoices not in Iniquity; It laments every thing that diſhonours God, Zealouſly takes part with his Juſtice againſt its own Sins, bewails and puniſhes in it ſelf the Sins of others, however Advantageous they may otherwiſe be to him.

Charity Rejoices in the Truth: It is happy even in this World, by entring into the Participation of the Joy, Beauty and Triumph of that Truth, which is the Happineſs of the Saints: It rejoices in the Knowledge of that Truth, which is ſo difficult in the Practice, becauſe by this it ſhall be deliver'd from its own Corruption: It loves Good, where-ever it is; the Conformity to this it loves in every Neighbour, and 'tis its Joy to make them love it.

Charity Bears all Things: It adores the Severity of God's Judgments, as much as his Patience and Long-ſuffering; and whilſt it ſincerely endeavours to remedy, yet it bears with its own Failings and Humours,

mours, and more with thoſe of the Perſons with whom it lives.

Charity Believes all Things: It has no Exception as to any thing of Faith, becauſe God's Authority and Truth is equally in all; it embraces not only the Divine Myſteries, but likewiſe thoſe Truths, which preſcribe Mortification, and the Croſs, the Love of Enemies, and Pardoning Injuries.

Charity Hopes all Things: Its Hopes has no more Bounds, than the Fidelity and Power of God, which are Infinite: It draws Motives of Hope from the Conſideration of its own weakneſs and nothing; and hopes more for its Neighbour than it ſelf, becauſe it believes others more Faithful, and more Humble.

Charity Suffers all things: It ſuffers all for God, becauſe this all is nothing, and God is All: It is never tired, and thinks it cannot ſuffer too much for Salvation; and is ready to purchaſe its Neighbour's Eternal Good at the Expence of all.

Charity never Fails: Becauſe it is the only Virtue, that ſhall never have end; becauſe as it is the Beginning, ſo it is the End, Perfection and Crown of all other Virtues; it is the Eternal Bond of all the Members with one another, and with Jeſus Chriſt their Head: It is by this both

Head

Head and Members shall be eternally consummated in God, who is Charity: It is this which shall make the Sacrifice, and all the Religion of Heaven, in Glorifying God for all Eternity.

Here's the true Description of Charity, without which, neither Fasting, nor any Act of virtue or Religion, can find acceptance with God: 'Tis that with which all Christians ought to be possess'd, who sincerely aim at Eternity. And tho' this Charity here in this Life, can never come to that perfection, in which the Blessed enjoy it in Heaven; yet some degrees of it we ought to have; and it is to be our daily Business so to advance in it, that we may have reason to hope, that notwithstanding our daily Oversights and Failings, it is this which generally directs our Life, and influences the main Body of our Actions. Such a degree of it, we ought to have at this time; but it must be the Gift of thy Mercy, O God: Grant it therefore, we beseech thee, to all the Faithful, that entering now into a State of Penance, their Fasting, their Self-denials, their Prayers and Alms, may be regarded by thee, and be effectual to the cancelling all their Sins; since without it, we know, all will profit nothing.

Quin-

Quinquagesima-Sunday.

GOSPEL,

Luke C. 18. V. 31. to the end.

BEhold we go up to Jerusalem. They are the Words of Christ to his Apostles; who having taken them apart from the Multitude, puts them in mind of all he was to suffer at *Jerusalem*, and of his Approaching Passion. This Gospel is made choice of at this time, as a seasonable Lesson to the Faithful, to inform them, that as Christ always walk'd with his Death in View, and made this the Disposition of his whole Life, to accomplish the Order of his Father; so they, more especially at this time, ought to call their Thoughts to the Remembrance of Death, and make their best Preparation for it.

For this end the Church sets up this Day the Bloody Standard; and by presenting them with a lively View of Christ's Sufferings, shews them the Cause in which they are engag'd, the manner in which they are to fight, and the only Hopes, by which they are to expect a Victory;

story, so as to triumph with Christ over Sin and Death. In this first, reproaching their Absurd Prophaneness, who taking now greater Liberties than usual in all that can be call'd Extravagant; by Gluttony, prepare for Fasting; by Excess, for Self-Denials; and by Prodigality, for helping the Poor. This is a Custom, which from our Genteel Predecessors, has been transmitted down to our Days; and tho' disapproved, and strongly oppos'd by the Labours of Pious Pastors, is still supported by Number; and even has those to favour it, in a modest way, whose Piety should give them an Abhorrence of all such Practices; so that whilst Christ calls to *Jerusalem*, where the Son of Man is to be Mock'd, Scourg'd and Crucified, they are so far from joining with him, in Sentiments of Grief, for what he suffers, that by their Sinful Extravagancies, they seem to take part with the *Jews*, in helping to Mock, Scourge, and Crucifie him. For what is it but a Mockery, so grosly to pervert the Design of the Church at this time? Were the Sins of these few abus'd Days to be laid open, I fear there would appear all that, which the Apostle declares to be Crucifying Christ again, and trampling on his Blood. As many then as have any Respect for the Church, and true Concern

for

ſor themſelves, I think, ought to give Ear to the preſent Summons, and not run then more perverſly into *Babylon*, when they are call'd to go up to *Jeruſalem*.

But what, is it to go up to *Jeruſalem*? It is to accompany Chriſt in the ſame Diſpoſition, with which he went up at this time, that is, with his Thoughts on Death, and all he was to ſuffer, as a Preparation to it. The Faithful are to conſider in particular, what he ſuffer'd, and reflecting, how much he made, both his Sufferings and Death, the Subject of his Thoughts, for the better Accompliſhment of his Father's Will, then ſee whether the ſame Method be not more neceſſary for them, than when the Hour comes, for the Execution of that Sentence, which is already pronounc'd againſt them, of going out of this World, they may be in a good Preparation for ſubmitting to it.

Our Natural Corruption, and the daily Indiſpoſitions, which are too apt to grow upon us, by our Commerce with the World, and with the Occaſions of Sin, encreaſe the Difficulties of dying well, rend'ring a due Preparation for it ſo very neceſſary, that they muſt raſhly depend on undeſerved Miracles, who entertain Hopes of a happy Death, without prepa-

ring

ring for it by daily Thoughts, and Endeavours, suitable to so great Change.

For dying well, the Soul ought to have such a Command over all its Passions, as to keep steddy to the Law of God, notwithstanding all the Powerful Sollicitations, that invite to Sin; so that it knows how to despise the Charms of Pleasures, Interest, and Ambition, and cannot approve of any thing that is not licens'd by Heaven. It ought to come to such a Degree of Indifferency, as to Earthly Things, as notwithstanding its strongest Ties, to be in a Readiness of forsaking all. It ought to have a Contempt of the World, a Desire of being united with God. It ought to have a Sincere Detestation for all past Sins, a Resolution of doing Right to Justice, in punishing them, and a perpetual Watchfulness for preventing all Relapses.

Now let any Christian, that is sensible of our common Weakness and Corruption, considering, whether it be reasonable to leave the Concern of Dying well, to the Hazards of the last Hour, or whether there be not a Necessity of making a long Preparation for it. They, who know how difficult a Task it is, to bring all Passions into a due Subiection, to work the Soul into a true Detestation of what it naturally

turally loves, to be in a Readiness, not only of forsaking Earth, but so as to be fitted for Heaven; know too, that according to the ordinary Methods of Grace, Time and Labour is necessary for this Work; and that for this end, all that seriously think of it, ought now to go up to *Jerusalem*, and from the Sufferings of Christ, take a Model of what they are to do.

He was wounded for our Iniquities, he was wounded to heal us; but since the Apostle informs us, that Christ suffer'd, leaving us an Example, we are not so to rest in his Wounds, as to believe his Sufferings to be our Exemption, but our Pattern; and such an one, as will certainly give a Value to whatever we undertake by his Example and render it effectual with God; and thus are we to make his Death the best Preparation for ours. Since therefore he was Mock'd, Spit on, Scourg'd, and Crucified, and by these Sufferings, were punish'd in his Sacred Person our Offences, we are now to follow the Copy, and turn these very Instruments of the Divine Justice against our selves, for the Remedy of our Disorders, with this Confidence, that what we do by the Direction of that Choice, which God made for the Remedy and Punishment of Sin, and by the Example of Christ

Chriſt ſuffering for Sin, will not fail of having a good Effect in us.

Here then may every good Chriſtian, having firſt view'd Chriſt under all his Paſſion, turn to himſelf, and ſay, It is I who have ſinn'd; all this weight of Puniſhment ought to have faln upon me; and now ſome part of it muſt fall, that ſo my paſt Sins may be puniſh'd, as Juſtice requires, and Proviſion made againſt thoſe Dangers, which are occaſion'd by the Wilful Indulgence of my Natural Corruption. I am no more to be a Jew, in Mocking, Spitting at, Scourging, and Crucifying Chriſt; but I am to give Proof of my being a Chriſtian, in turning all this, where it is due, againſt my own Sins, and thoſe Paſſions, which put me in hazard of Relapſe. I will now begin to mock my own Paſſions, and ſpit at them in Scorn; in all their Attempts I will ſay, What! are you to govern a Soul, redeem'd by the Blood of Chriſt? Do you expect ſtill to command? No, bow down, Rebellious Evils, and be ſubject to him, who is the Lord of all; you are Slaves, and muſt obey. The Will of God is my Law, and to this muſt bend all that is within me. If you are ſtubborn, and ſtill claim the Power you have ſo long uſurp'd, the Scourge ſhall be my Help; my Fleſh

and

and Self-will, which you have gratified, shall by repeated Mortifications, suffer in Proportion to the Satisfaction you have given them, and thus learn to be afraid of Sin. I have now begun, and there shall be no Peace, till I have Crucified all that is Corrupt. It was not the Jews, but you Crucified the Lord of all; your own Contrivance shall now fall on your own Heads; and tho' you have the Devil and World Confederate, their Power shall not prevail against him that strengthens me, but all shall be Crucified with you.

Thus must Christians, by viewing their Dying Lord, learn to prepare for Death; there's no other way for doing it well; and now being the time, when the Church summons all to Prayer, Fasting, and doing Penance for Sins; ought not this to be the great Task of this Holy Time, that by a Separation from Sin, and all that disposes to it; they may renew the Memory of Christ's Death, and prepare for their own? 'Tis a hard thing to turn our Hands against our selves; but if all our Dangers are from our selves, and our Passions be our greatest Enemies, what must we do? Either they must be brought into Subjection, or we be overcome by them. This is our Case: Help us therefore,

therefore, O God, and since the Time thou now grantest, is the Effect of thy Mercy; give us Grace to make the best Use of it, in punishing Sin, and reforming the Sinner, lest by neglecting this, we may never more have Opportunity of Providing against Death, but be at length found unprepar'd.

FINIS.

B M